

M. Slaying 711

Chapter 711: It's fine?!

"RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAR!!!"

As Mount Thunder was blasted apart, a deep and resonant sound that seemed like the chant of a dragon echoed from the distant abyss in response to the summoning of the Great High Priest.

Venerable Wen Yuan reacted to the sound, causing the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings to rise into the air once more. Alongside it, the part of Mount Thunder that was still standing was lifted like chess pieces and smashed back into the dark abyss.

Boom!

The abyss trembled, and countless scaled demons, including flood dragons, insects, and fish, were obliterated before they could even make a sound.

After issuing the summoning, the Great High Priest launched an attack on Venerable Wen Yuan, determined to prevent him from acting so brazenly again. With a wave of his scepter, a blood-stained aura infused with countless demon souls surged forward, enveloping Venerable Wen Yuan in midair.

At that moment, Venerable Wen Yuan moved such a great piece of earth several thousand li away and had little time to defend himself. However, with Daoist Yan and Di Nufeng, two powerful protectors, by his side, he felt no concern.

Daoist Yan's Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword pierced through the air, striking directly at the Great High Priest!

Boom!

The blood-stained aura unleashed by the Great High Priest was pierced by the sword qi of the Cloud of Determination, eliciting horrific screams. Yet, more demon souls surged forward, attempting to devour the sword qi.

At that moment, Di Nufeng made a bold move, raising her arm to unleash a vast wave of purple-gold divine fire, clearing a wide swath of demon souls. Together with Yan Zi, they quickly swept the skies clean!

Although Di Nufeng was only at the seventh realm, she was able to actively participate in this fight among those at the eighth realm. The immense power of her Samadhi True Fire was very clear.

The two worked together to trap the Great High Priest, but suddenly, from the ruins of Mount Thunder, a massive purple-black ox charged forward! Its enormous body shook the earth with its power!

Boom!

With the incredible momentum that Gonggong[1] had when he rammed into Mount Buzhou[2], the demon king of Mount Thunder unleashed an attack powerful enough to shatter both heaven and earth!

At that moment, a streak of golden light flew in from the distant sky.

Whoosh!

The golden light appeared insignificant compared to the towering wild ox, but when the two collided, they unleashed an equally matched wave of power.

Bang!

The mere clash of their powers caused the whole world to tremble.

It was hard to imagine the spectacle that would occur if either of them collided with anything else.

The golden light rebounded, revealing a majestic figure.

It was an elderly man with snow-white hair, clad in dark-gray light armor. His face was flushed with excitement, and he wore a delighted smile.

"Hahaha! Who would have thought I'd get the chance to battle in the Far West in my lifetime? How thrilling! Venerable Wen Yuan, let's slay these demonic creatures together!"

"Brother Yan, very bold and heroic of you," Venerable Wen Yuan responded firmly.

The elderly man was none other than Yan Dahu[3], the vice sect leader of the Great Astral Sect and a cultivator at the eighth realm.

The Great Astral Sect shared a strong bond with the Mount Shu Sect, a connection that didn't start with younger disciples like Chu Liang. It had been the camaraderie of the previous generation that paved the way for Chu Liang and Yun Chaoxian to quickly form a close friendship.

The Mount Shu Sect's strong relationships with other sects were largely established under the leadership of Venerable Wen Yuan.

Before arriving in the Far West, he had sent messages to each of these allies.

To rescue Chu Liang, the Mount Shu Sect mobilized a force even greater than the one used at the battle during the Mount Shu Summit!

As the demon king from the Abyss of Wrath awakened and descended, another elderly man arrived from the other direction, accompanied by hearty laughter.

"I heard that the Mount Shu Sect is suppressing the Far West, so how could I, Shentu Yang, not lend a hand?"

He was clad in scholar's robes, yet he looked even wilder than a martial artist of the Great Astral Sect. Following behind him were dozens of desolate mountains that belonged to no one!

Shentu Yang, Vice Headmaster of the Ascending Dragon Academy, laughed, "Hehe, I was delayed a bit while collecting these ownerless mountains along the way."

"Vice Headmaster, your timing is perfect," Venerable Wen Yuan responded.

"What do you want me to smash?"

As the Great High Priest hovered in the air, he felt immense pressure. He had no idea how things were going on Caiyi's side, but unless all the demon kings woke up, he feared they wouldn't be able to hold out.

Why does each ally of the Mount Shu Sect seem fiercer than the one before?

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Not long after Venerable Wen Yuan departed, Mount Shu received a visit from a group of unwelcome guests.

The Circle of Immortal Friends had its pros and cons. While it allowed for quick communication about enemies, it also made their own movements easily traceable. News of Mount Shu's weakened state swiftly reached Taotie City, causing diabolical cultivators from the nearby Southern Regions to secretly converge at Red Cotton Peak.

They might not have known who was willing to pay such a hefty price, but they did know that destroying Red Cotton Peak would bring them a significant reward.

Red Cotton Peak had always been a chaotic hub, with countless streaks of light, sword auras, spirit birds, and airships coming and going. Naturally, not everyone who passed through was virtuous. Today, a group of diabolical cultivators blended in seamlessly, and for a time, no one noticed anything unusual.

Thus, when the chaos erupted, the passing cultivators were caught off guard.

Swish!

The first splash of blood came from a black-robed man lurking in the corner. He suddenly summoned a white skull, aiming to strike a female cultivator in front of him. However, she noticed just in time and, with a flick of her hand, sent two red threads flying to wrap around his neck, severing his head in an instant.

The unfortunate diabolical cultivator seemed to serve as a prelude to the outcome of the chaos that would unfold today.

Of course, his misfortune of being counterattacked by a powerful cultivator didn't mean the others shared the same fate. Around one to two hundred diabolical cultivators had infiltrated the area, and when they launched their sudden attack, they caused significant damage to the surrounding cultivators, leaving a trail of bloody carnage in their wake.

However, Mount Shu had prior experience with being attacked. The merchants of Red Cotton Peak had clearly been notified of how to prepare and respond to such a situation. They immediately shut their doors.

Meanwhile, the manager of Red Cotton Peak flew into the air and shouted, "Diabolical cultivators are attacking! Everyone, stay close to the shops for safety. If anyone tries to take advantage of the chaos to attack others, join forces to eliminate them at once!"

The number of righteous cultivators here far exceeded that of the diabolical cultivators. The latter's advantage lay in striking suddenly from the shadows, causing damage amidst the chaos, and even inciting righteous cultivators to attack each other in the confusion. However, the people of Red Cotton Peak quickly took control of the situation, organizing themselves effectively to stop the disorder from escalating.

Of course, the diabolical cultivators had more tricks up their sleeves. Suddenly, a black vortex appeared in midair, and from within it emerged a colossal White-Bone Mountain, its massive size surpassing even Red Cotton Peak by several magnitudes.

The colossal White-Bone Mountain hovered hundreds of zhang above the ground, casting an ominous shadow, before plunging downward without hesitation!

This strike of immense power would surely obliterate the Red Cotton Peak into pieces!

Boom!

At this moment, Venerable Wen Yuan was obliterating mountains in the Far West, while Mount Shu seemed destined to face a similar fate. Could this be the work of the Heavenly Law? Or perhaps... karma?

A deafening tremor echoed throughout Mount Shu and beyond.

The White-Bone Mountain crashed down with immense force, causing Red Cotton Peak to visibly shake violently. Yet, it didn't shatter—it merely swayed twice, which was rather astounding.

The more astonishing thing was that the buildings didn't collapse. Even if the peak didn't collapse, the White-Bone Mountain's heavy impact should have at least destroyed the buildings atop it, right?

But... when the White-Bone Mountain rose up to the sky again, the fleeing cultivators around were stunned to find that, aside from a handful of buildings crushed into dust, the other buildings—those rebuilt as part of Red Cotton Peak's renovation plan—remained standing firm.

The diabolical cultivators nearby widened their eyes in disbelief.

It's... fine?!

Chapter 712: War Breaks Out!

Changfeng, the Demon King of the Great Marshlands, was now facing the hardest challenge of his life. Throughout the past thousand years of his life, he had never felt so close to death.

After taking Daoist Changsheng's fatal blow that had been meant for Chu Liang, Changfeng plummeted heavily into the sea, dispersing most of his palm force. Though severely injured both internally and externally, he believed that, given time, his wounds would eventually heal.

However, upon returning to the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings, he realized something was terribly wrong.

It turned out that during this time, his life source had been rapidly draining away. Demons, naturally gifted with longevity, could be seen as having traded their deeper understanding of the Great Dao for an extended lifespan. Initially, he dismissed it as ordinary injuries. However, upon entering the Demon God Temple, he was shocked to discover that his qi and blood had been severely weakened and that he had aged nearly a thousand years in mere days.

Thus, the Great High Priest hurried to investigate his condition but could only conclude one thing: Changfeng had been struck by Daoist Cangsheng's divine skill. The effects of the Great Dao of Infinity were rapidly eroding Changfeng's corporeal body. If this continued, it was only a matter of time before he was reduced to nothing more than a pile of decaying bones.

The Great High Priest was trying every method he knew to try and stop the erosion of the Great Dao of Infinity. However, that was when the thunderous sounds of collapsing mountains reached his

ears. The Great High Priest realized that if he didn't intervene, Venerable Wen Yuan would flatten the entire Mountain Range of the Seven Kings. And so, the Great High Priest hurried out to help with the defense, leaving Changfeng behind.

This was the first time that Changfeng had felt a span of time was agonizingly long. He desperately hoped the Great High Priest would swiftly defeat the forces of the Mount Shu Sect and return to save him... It would be fine even if the Great High Priest got defeated, as long as he would come back after that to save his life.

At this moment, Changfeng lay in the temple's chamber. His enormous purple python tail flickered in and out of sight, his thoughts muddled and hazy.

If this went on any longer, he felt he might soon be meeting his great-grandmother in the afterlife.

Logically, a cultivator at the eighth realm should not have such a fragile life force. However, the Great Dao of Infinity was extraordinarily strange, and when amplified by the Chrono Wheel of the East Sea, its effects became utterly unfathomable.

In addition, the Great Dao of Severed Breath that Changfeng controlled could not do anything about the effects of the Great Dao of Infinity. No matter how he circulated his qi, he could only slow the aging slightly.

Thankfully, Caiyi approached at this time and asked, "How are you?"

"I'm fine..." Changfeng answered, pretending to be strong in front of her. "Just dying, that's all."

Caiyi gazed at him for a moment before raising her hand and lightly brushing her fingers through the air. A seven-colored radiance enveloped Changfeng, and his vision blurred as he fell into a dreamlike illusion.

Strangely, as she did so, his physical state began to stabilize, and the rapid aging slowed noticeably.

"I've created an illusion where time flows ten thousand times slower," Caiyi said. "Given how much essence of the Great Dao of Infinity remains, its effects cannot overpower the strength of my Great Dao of Myriad Forms, so you should be able to hold on for a while longer. However, to truly save your life, the divine skill cast through the East Sea Chrono Wheel must be deactivated. As for whether you can survive this ordeal, that will depend on your fate."

Fights between eighth-realm cultivators were ultimately a clash of the Great Daos. Each Dao had its own unique method of defeating an opponent, and the outcome depended on the intensity of the Dao essence that each side had unleashed.

Daoist Cangsheng's cultivation was undoubtedly stronger than Caiyi's, but this was only a single divine skill he had cast, and Caiyi had her own way to counter it. Her Great Dao of Myriad Forms could create illusions so lifelike that even the Great Dao of Infinity could be fooled.

After temporarily stabilizing Changfeng's condition, violent tremors ran through the ground as Venerable Wen Yuan slammed the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings onto Mount Thunder, shaking Caiyi as well

Caiyi took a quick glance outside before transforming into a streak of rainbow light, darting out in an instant.

...

The sky over the Far West was constantly changing at this moment.

The Demon King of Mount Thunder, a giant wild ox as massive as a mountain, charged forward, only to be intercepted by Yan Dahu of the Great Astral Sect. Meanwhile, the Demon King of the Abyss of Wrath, a six-winged flood dragon, ascended into the sky but was intimidated by Shentu Yang, who was carrying dozens of mountain peaks.

The ox and the flood dragon together nearly spanned and blocked half the sky. In contrast, the human cultivators, though much smaller in size, radiated power that was as imposing as the ox and flood dragon.

Soon after, demon qi surged from the Desolate Plains in the Far West as a massive jet-black bird roared into view. On closer inspection, it wasn't covered in feathers but flames.

The Demon King of the Desolate Plains was the ancient and fearsome Black Golden Crow, a demonic creature that had slaughtered countless beings during the Demon God's era. Its presence alone made the air feel like a blazing furnace, and the sky appeared to hold a second, black sun.

“Humans daring to step into the Far West to seek their deaths? It’s been so long since I’ve savored the taste of roasted human flesh...” The Demon King of the Desolate Plains said, its voice terrifyingly cold and sinister.

A thunderous shout boomed from afar, “Then come and try!”

A celestial star descended, radiating an overwhelming aura, its dazzling brilliance blinding to the eye. It was as if a star had fallen from the heavens, now suspended high above the land.

Whoosh!

As the starlight faded, it revealed a tall and imposing figure.

It was Zhao Liuting, the Heavenly Strategist of the Celestial King Sect!

The Heavenly Strategist held the highest authority beneath the King in the Celestial King Sect. As the sect’s most powerful combatant in battle, Zhao Liuting’s countless victories over the years had struck fear into the hearts of demons and evildoers alike.

The Celestial King Sect had been long-standing allies of the Mount Shu Sect, working together to withstand the pressure from the Penglai Supreme Sect. Upon receiving Venerable Wen Yuan’s call for assistance, Zhao Liuting wasted no time and rushed to their aid.

Boom!

As the Black Golden Crow’s flames collided with the Heavenly Strategist’s starlight, the tension in the air reached its breaking point, as though it could erupt into chaos at any moment.

At that moment, there was an explosion in the Frostveil Domain, located far north. It sent a blast of bone-chilling cold across the Far West, instantly lowering the scorching temperatures.

Hiss!

There were even hissing sounds of steam rising from nowhere.

A nearly transparent figure rose from the Frostveil Domain. Amid the ferocious and towering figures of the demon kings, this figure seemed out of place. Emerging from the shattered ice was clearly a translucent-skinned young girl, appearing around twelve or thirteen years old and exceptionally petite.

Accompanying her arrival was an icy chill that emanated from within.

"We demons have already retreated here, yet you still seek to exterminate us?" The girl's voice sounded ethereal. However, her mouth did not move as she spoke; her voice seemed to just ring out from nowhere. "Isn't this a bit excessive?"

A soft Buddhist chant wafted over from a distance. "Amitabha. Demon King of the Frostveil Domain, you might not know, but demons have been exceedingly active across the nine provinces in recent years. I shan't mention other regions, but my Buddhist Cloud Monastery was recently struck with a calamity."

Indeed, the next to arrive was the Sweeper Monk of the Buddhist Cloud Monastery, Dhyana Master Dawu.

Ever since he revealed his cultivation level during the two demon kings' raid on the monastery, he no longer concealed it. Upon receiving Venerable Wen Yuan's request for help, he was one of the first to arrive in the Far West. Meanwhile, Abbot Dayu, who presided over the Dharma Lotus Platform, refrained from acting rashly.

The Buddhist Cloud Monastery had lost many disciples because of that raid. However, there wasn't much they could do in response to that, since the demons were hiding in desolate lands. Any counterattacks only killed a few minor demons, leaving the demon kings unharmed. In the end, the matter was left unresolved.

This time, with Venerable Wen Yuan gathering forces to rescue Chu Liang, the Buddhist Cloud Monastery eagerly joined in. If they could use this chance to kill or injure a demon king, it would be a great merit.

In no time, Venerable Wen Yuan had gathered a powerful force that posed a real threat to the demons of the Far West.

On the other side, the Great High Priest stood his ground, unwavering.

“Chu Liang holds a sacred creature of our race,” he said in a deep voice. “Until he hands it over, we cannot allow him to leave. However, I can promise that his life will not be harmed.”

“All negotiations start with you handing over Chu Liang,” Venerable Wen Yuan replied firmly. “Until then, there is only one option—war.”

“Rawrarararaya!” Di Nufeng shouted, flailing her arms, poised to charge into battle at any moment.

Of course, she wasn’t reckless enough to take on the eighth-realm demon kings directly. Once the battle started in the sky, she would storm into the Demon God Temple, search for Chu Liang, and slaughter any divine envoys or lesser demons in her path.

Basically, her strategy was to attack the weaker demons.

Although most of the demons didn’t fully understand the situation, the humans bringing the fight to their doorstep ignited their centuries-old hatred, making them equally prepared for battle.

At the height of tension, just as the battle was about to begin, a clear voice suddenly rang out from behind them, “Stop!”

A streak of rainbow light shot through the air. Upon landing, the person inside was revealed to be Caiyi.

She turned to Venerable Wen Yuan and said, “Chu Liang has already escaped.”

As soon as Di Nufeng heard this, her hair stood on end. She shouted, “What? Do you take me for a three-year-old? With my disciple’s cultivation level, you expect me to believe he escaped from you? Did you kill him already?!”

"We have no intention of starting a war between the humans and demons! Nor do we wish to fight all of you!"

Caiyi stared at the powerful human cultivators before her. They represented only a fraction of the strength of the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten, yet they were nearly enough to fight all of the

demon kings and the Great High Priest—the Far West's most powerful demons. The vast disparity between the humans and demons was clear.

Caiyi quickly explained, “Chu Liang broke my restraints with the sword intent of the Great Dao of Severing the Void. He then escaped using the power of a hidden realm. I really have no idea where he went!”

The powerful human cultivators all turned their gaze to Venerable Wen Yuan. After all, he had orchestrated this entire situation, and the decision to fight or not rested in his hands.

Venerable Wen Yuan gazed out at the distant Far West. Though more than three millennia had passed and much of it remained desolate, there were signs of efforts to build a civilization. Under Caiyi’s rule, the Verdant Foxhills region had grown to resemble human villages in many ways.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Venerable Wen Yuan’s gaze turned icy as he declared, “I’ve already made myself clear—all negotiations must start with you handing over Chu Liang.”

Before the demon kings on the other side could respond, he flipped his hand.

He activated the Killing Move on the Chessboard of the World.

This signified the start of the War!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

This time, the destruction spanned thousands of miles, causing the entire land to erupt and overturn in an instant.

This was the power of Primordial Chaos!

Chapter 713: The Rear Force

Destruction was always easier than construction. This was true for the demons, and it was true for Mount Shu as well.

The only exception was Red Cotton Peak.

Before the arrival of the White-Bone Mountain, Red Cotton Peak was in a state of chaos. Hundreds of diabolical cultivators were mixed in with the crowd, wantonly injuring and killing people. The righteous cultivators fought back, but they also turned on each other amidst the confusion.

Fortunately, Red Cotton Peak had a very effective warning system. All shops immediately shut their doors, allowing the righteous cultivators to form groups and move with their backs to the shops.

The diabolical cultivators, who had been using the crowd as their cover, suddenly found themselves surrounded. Had it not been for the sudden appearance of White-Bone Mountain, these diabolical cultivators would likely have met their end in a matter of moments.

Seeing that White-Bone Mountain had arrived and was about to smash down on Red Cotton Peak, the diabolical cultivators on the peak eagerly anticipated a scene of flesh and blood flying everywhere.

Don't you love hiding in your buildings? Don't you enjoy leaning against your shops? Then crumble together with this mountain peak! We want to see rivers of blood!

With such thoughts in mind, the diabolical cultivators leaped into the air in unison so that they wouldn't get injured alongside the righteous cultivators.

On the other hand, the righteous cultivators were caught off guard, and many of them bore the impact of the collision with Red Cotton Peak.

Kaboom!

Following the deafening collision, clouds of dust and smoke rose up.

Surprisingly, Red Cotton Peak did not crumble under that fierce hit, but the more astonishing thing was that it had only lost a few earthen buildings and mountain rocks. Most of the buildings and pavilions on the peak were still standing!

The damaged buildings were all shops of merchants that had opted out of the reconstruction plan for Red Cotton Peak. On the other hand, the shops of the merchants that had trusted Chu Liang's advice and let the Hall of Construction renovate their buildings had emerged from the collision almost entirely unscathed!

In fact, the shops that had been upgraded to Feng-grade buildings were so unaffected that someone sleeping inside might not even have been awakened.

The diabolical cultivators couldn't help but gasp in astonishment. The Feng-grade buildings were terrifyingly sturdy!

The thing that terrified them even more was the Mount Shu Sect's swift response. The Mount Shu Sect's Four Guardian Elders and their disciples charged over on their flying swords, killing their way toward the White-Bone Mountain!

According to the Dark King Sect's plan, Red Cotton Peak should have collapsed by now, and the diabolical cultivators should have retreated amidst the chaos. However, not only was Red Cotton Peak still intact, but it also retained the majority of the righteous cultivators, who now ascended en masse to hunt them down!

Earlier, they could use the crowd as a cover while they injured and killed the righteous cultivators, but now the diabolical cultivators were suspended in midair and utterly conspicuous. Dumbfounded, they scattered in all directions, wailing and fleeing for their lives.

The main force of the Dark King Sect's operation this time was, once again, the White-Bone Hall.

The White-Bone Hall had continued to recruit the largest number of diabolical cultivators among the Dark King Sect's halls, so it was the most convenient for them to handle large-scale operations like this. Nevertheless, the core forces providing the real power came from the Northern Abyss Hall and the Vermillion-Azurite Hall. As for the Scarlet-Robe Hall, they did not participate in the operation against the Mount Shu Sect.

Seeing that the operation had already failed, the masters of the three participating sects stepped up to protect their disciples as they retreated.

The White-Bone Hall Master controlled the enormous White-Bone Mountain, shifting it to the front. The mountain had failed to smash Red Cotton Peak, but its sheer size made it a very challenging obstacle to overcome.

The Northern Abyss Hall Master raised a mirror that had been polished with a black stone. The mirror showed a reflection of the Mount Shu Sect's forces, and identical soul soldiers immediately emerged from it, seeking to fight their original counterparts. It was an eerie and sinister sight.

With a swift stroke of a large brush, the Vermillion-Azurite Hall Master painted a black celestial river that cascaded down out of thin air like a waterfall, blocking the path of the righteous cultivators pursuing them. With another stroke going in the reverse direction, a black slit appeared in the sky and rapidly expanded into a massive black hole.

The Dark King Sect was using the same old tricks again—they were trying to escape!

Although there were many righteous cultivators present, the suddenness of the Dark King Sect's raid left them disorganized and unable to concentrate their forces. The Dark King Sect were fewer in number, but they had clearly learned from the last grand battle at Mount Shu. Once they were done executing their meticulously crafted plan, they began making their retreat.

With White-Bone Mountain covering the rear and the Northern Abyss Hall Master blocking their pursuers, it seemed that most of the Dark King Sect's members were about to make an escape.

However, right at that moment, someone shouted, "Coming and going as you please? What kind of place do you think Red Cotton Peak is?!"

The clear and sonorous voice echoed throughout Mount Shu and beyond, exuding an immense feeling of dauntlessness.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Two beams of swordlight—one violet and one azure—suddenly shot over from Sword Sheath Peak like they had been summoned.

The two beams raced toward a dashing and elegant young man standing in midair.

This young man had just arrived at Mount Shu and happened to be in the perfect position to block the diabolical cultivators' escape route, looking much like a mantis trying to stop a chariot.

He was just one man trying to stop a few hundred people. It seemed he intended to serve as Red Cotton Peak's rear force... and cut off the diabolical cultivators' escape route.

Someone recognized the young man and yelled, "Chu Liang?"

Chu Liang was no longer the nameless nobody he had once been. In the world of immortality cultivation, those who remained unaware of his name were in the minority. Nevertheless, even those who knew him had little understanding of the true extent of his strength.

One such person was the master of the Northern Abyss Hall.

Back at the Mount Shu Summit, Chu Liang, along with Jiang Yuebai, Xu Ziyang, and Ling Ao, had almost perished at the hands of Chen Mingcang, the master of the Northern Abyss Hall, and his disciples.

At the time, Chu Liang had unleashed his full power and wielded the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, but he had still failed to slay Chen Mingcang's eldest disciple.

Now, Chen Mingcang, the master of the Northern Abyss Hall, was once again standing before Chu Liang.

Seeing Chu Liang blocking the Dark King Sect's path, Chen Mingcang felt the weight of fate descending upon him.

It sure is absurdly daring of you to try and block the Dark King Sect's retreat all on your own. It seems I am fated to kill you. You were lucky enough to escape six years ago, but I will now make sure I finish the job!

Chen Mingcang formed hand seals with both hands, summoning an aura that seemed foreign and savage. He was enveloped by the shadow of a colossal figure that resembled an ancient deity.

Despite looking like a lion hunting a rabbit, Chen Mingcang went all out; he did not hold back in the slightest. He showed Chu Liang his utmost respect by using his strongest divine ability—the Dark King Transcendent Form!

However, what Chen Mingcang didn't realize was that Chu Liang was not the same as he had been six years ago. The young disciple who had been trampled on in the past was now a seventh-realm Eminent One...

This news had long spread among the Circle of Immortal Friends, but it had yet to reach the ranks of the Dark King Sect. The informant who had provided them with intelligence on the Mount Shu Sect had only reported that Chu Liang had been captured by the demons. There had been no mention of his cultivation level.

Thus, Chen Mingcang noticed nothing amiss... until the very moment that Chu Liang's sword qi surged skyward.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The violet and azure swordlights converged, and Chu Liang unleashed a terrifyingly powerful sword intent.

Seeing that, Chen Mingcang's pupils dilated in shock. This is... the aura of the Dao Attainment Realm? How did this kid get to this level...?

Chen Mingcang wasn't the only one in shock.

The voices of the two sword spirits rang out in surprise beside Chu Liang.

"Whoa, kiddo! You're already at the seventh realm?"

"Oho! Now we can hack that guy to pieces and send him to see his ancestors!"

What kind of power would a seventh-realm sword intent containing the Great Dao of Severing the Void unleash when paired with the Violet and Azure Twin Swords?

For anyone other than Chen Mingcang, the beam of swordlight looked so bright and dazzling that it was very difficult to describe. On the other hand, all Chen Mingcang saw was a sliver of white light tearing through the void. Despite being in his formidable Dark King Transcendent Form, Chen Mingcang suddenly felt like a skinless fish lying on a chopping board.

Well, I'm screwed.

The violet and azure swordlight cleaved the enormous Dark King Transcendent Form in two, and it faded away in a flash.

That piercing beam of swordlight was world-shakingly astonishing! Both the Vermillion-Azurite Hall Master and the White-Bone Hall Master were stunned.

Even White-Bone Mountain seemed to be intimidated by the sword qi, as it turned toward Chu Liang.

However, it might have been a little better off if it hadn't turned...

In the very next instant, the violet and azure swordlight shot toward the White-Bone Mountain, piercing straight through that gigantic skull![1]

Chu Liang shouted, "What are you looking at?!"

Chapter 714: Mountain in Peril

The Elder of White-Bone Mountain left the world peacefully.

...

Earlier...

When Chu Liang appeared and blocked off the escape route of the Dark King Sect's forces, the large group of diabolical cultivators under Chen Mingcang's command noticed him. On the other hand, the Elder of White-Bone Mountain did not. He was busy maneuvering his towering skull mountain to obstruct the Mount Shu Sect's forces pursuing them.

The Mount Shu Sect's forces were led by the combined strength of Mount Shu's Four Guardian Elders and the seventh-realm peak masters like Wang Xuanling. Once they caught up to the Dark King Sect's forces, they were more than capable of easily annihilating all of the diabolical cultivators.

According to the Dark King Sect's plan, the Elder of White-Bone Mountain would use his gigantic skull mountain to hold off the Mount Shu Sect's forces while the rest of the diabolical cultivators retreated. The Mount Shu Sect's forces were charging over from the rest of Mount Shu. That meant

there was a considerable distance between them and Red Cotton Peak, making it feasible for the Dark King Sect's forces to escape.

However, the Dark King Sect's forces hadn't anticipated that another threat would appear behind them—Chu Liang.

Normally, one young disciple would not have posed much of a problem. It would have been nothing short of suicidal for him to try and stop hundreds of diabolical cultivators, including the Northern Abyss Hall Master and the Vermillion-Azurite Hall Master, on his own.

Who could have imagined that Chu Liang would unleash such a terrifying burst of power in an instant?

When the swordlight destroyed Chen Mingcang, who was in his Dark King Transcendent Form, everyone present was reminded of the young man who had slain Taowu at the Mount Shu Summit.

Back then, Chu Liang had secretly relied on the Whale-Riding Immortal's power, but this time, he relied solely on his own power!

Chu Liang's cultivation level had skyrocketed to the seventh realm, but a seasoned seventh-realm Eminent One like Chen Mingcang wasn't easy to kill. After all, cultivators at such a high level would have trump cards that would allow them to survive any situation.

This was precisely why powerful cultivators often made covert and calculated moves in battle. If they revealed too many of their skills, their enemies would be able to prepare ways to counter them. In that case, it might be difficult for them to kill their enemies despite being at a much higher cultivation level. Nevertheless, success was attainable with the element of surprise.

That was exactly how Chu Liang did it.

Had Chen Mingcang harbored even a sliver of caution, he might have evaded death. However, he had failed to anticipate Chu Liang's explosive increase in power. That led him to charge headfirst into a sword strike powered by the Violet and Azure Twin Swords and the Great Dao of Severing the Void. Chen Mingcang was instantly cleaved in two.

The Violet and Azure Twin Swords were ranked seventeenth in the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures. No one could hope to escape from their blades.

This incredibly powerful sword strike was like a stone shattering the heavens. It stunned not only the diabolical cultivators but also the Mount Shu Sect's forces behind the fleeing Dark King Sect's forces. They all stopped in their tracks, gazing intently to identify whose subordinate general had suddenly appeared and unleashed such might.

Initially, they thought that the person with the most ruthless strikes around was Di Nufeng. It turned out there was actually someone who was even swifter and more decisive in taking action.

How could the diabolical cultivators possibly dare to continue moving forward after seeing how sharp Chu Liang's swordlight was? But the black hole was still hundreds of zhang away, far out of reach. The diabolical cultivators found themselves trembling fearfully like cicadas in winter. Caught between a ferocious tiger in front and a pack of wolves behind, it seemed like they were doomed to face annihilation.

Nonetheless, Chu Liang did not bother attacking these small fry. Like everyone else, he hadn't anticipated the overwhelming force of his strike. Still, since it was so powerful, he would naturally make full use of his advantage and target the strongest presence on the battlefield instead—White-Bone Mountain!

This renowned enchanted artifact of the Dark King Sect had always been elusive and difficult to capture. The most damage the righteous cultivators had managed to inflict on it was when Daoist Yan pierced it with a sword in the past.

This time, the Violet and Azure Twin Swords launched a focused strike on it. Just as the White-Bone Mountain turned to face Chu Liang, the Violet and Azure Twin Swords pierced through it!

However, that wasn't enough. Chu Liang motioned with one finger from each hand, splitting the beam of violet and azure swordlight. A second later, the two beams of swordlight were dancing like fireflies, weaving through the air and darting through White-Bone Mountain. They pierced the skull thousands of times in mere moments!

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

This diabolical artifact, forged from the skull of unknown materials, was finally destroyed!

Boom!

White-Bone Mountain exploded with a deafening roar, disintegrating completely. A white figure flew out from the destroyed skull. Disguised as a fragment of the skull, the figure attempted to rush into the black hole and escape.

Chu Liang, with his sharp senses, spotted the figure. He raised an eyebrow and said, "Trying to escape?"

Whoosh!

The two beams of swordlight shot toward the figure to make a decisive kill!

Seeing no way to avoid them, the figure quickly turned around and raised a hand, conjuring a white barrier. It creaked and groaned as it blocked the Violet and Azure Twin Swords' attack.

The figure hovering in midair was short and entirely white. It turned out to be a skeleton! Yet, the flickering flames of life within its eye sockets revealed that this was, in fact, a living being.

It turned out that the Elder of White-Bone Mountain had stumbled upon an ancient hidden realm in his youth. That was where he had acquired the diabolical artifact White-Bone Mountain and also where he had fallen victim to a malicious curse, losing all his flesh and blood forever. He wasn't a ghost, but he had been forced to live as a skeleton ever since.

This was why he had fallen to the diabolical path, never revealing his true form and relying on an army of subordinates to do his bidding. Unfortunately, with White-Bone Mountain destroyed, he had no choice but to reveal the stark reality of his skeleton form in front of everyone.

The white barrier, a shield of bones he had conjured, was cracking inch by inch under the relentless pressure of the Violet and Azure Twin Swords. It was on the verge of shattering, and his life hung on by a thread.

At that moment, the air suddenly seemed to freeze.

It felt as though an invisible hand had gripped the hearts of all the people present, causing their pulse to falter for an instant as the sky turned ominously dark.

This sensation...

Finding the sensation eerily familiar, Chu Liang quickly leaped backward.

It was just as Chu Liang expected.

At the next moment, a hand emerged from the black hole and grabbed the Elder of White-Bone Mountain, pulling him out from under the Violet and Azure Twin Swords' deadly blades.

Whoosh!

The Violet and Azure Twin Swords hovered in midair, hesitating to advance further.

That was because a figure had emerged from the black hole, clad in flowing black robes with his hair flying about wildly in the wind. He was none other than the leader of the Dark King Sect—Lin Poyun!

The last time he appeared in public had been at Fengya Mountain. Monk Wu'e, the manifestation of the good parts of Lin Poyun's soul, had shown up to disrupt his Dao heart. Since escaping from that situation, Lin Poyun had vanished without a trace.

Even the disciples of the Dark King Sect had no idea that their sect leader would arrive today. The sight of him ignited hope in the eyes of the diabolical cultivators who had nearly succumbed to despair.

With no eighth-realm cultivator at Mount Shu, Lin Poyun was an unstoppable force. Nevertheless, it didn't matter even if there was an eighth-realm presence there. As long as he activated the True Form of Ksitigarbha, he could still raze the Mount Shu Sect to the ground!

Things were playing out just as the diabolical cultivators had hoped.

Lin Poyun had arrived, and he rescued the Elder of White-Bone Mountain with one hand. His cold gaze swept across the battlefield, assessing the situation in a single breath. Then the corners of his lips raised into a cold smile.

With his other hand, he pressed down a mass of black clouds, spreading them across Mount Shu!

Anyone that came into contact with the clouds would lose their soul and die. Any peak that the clouds passed over would collapse into ruins. Taking advantage of Venerable Wen Yuan's absence, Lin Poyun intended to completely destroy Mount Shu!

The black clouds expanded rapidly, leaving no one with a chance of escape. They were all about to be corroded, rendered down to nothing but bone!

"Fall back!" someone shouted from among the Mount Shu Sect's forces.

It was Wang Xuanling. He stepped forward, holding his sword with one hand. With a single sword strike, he created a gap in the black clouds, temporarily halting their advance. Yet, a few seconds later, the clouds floated back into the gap.

It was far too difficult for him to stop Lin Poyun alone.

Wang Xuanling raised a golden token. He summoned spiritual qi from all of Mount Shu's peaks and activated a shrouding mist of multicolored light.

It was the Grand Mountain-Protecting Formation of Mount Shu!

Whenever Venerable Wen Yuan was absent from Mount Shu, the Heaven Authority Token they had reclaimed was entrusted to Wang Xuanling, the grand peak master. This was why he had not accompanied Venerable Wen Yuan's group to the Far West.

Using the power of the Grand Mountain-Protecting Formation, the dense black clouds were temporarily held back. However, the colorful mist soon showed signs of an impending collapse.

All enchanted formations needed cultivation power to run. If the caster did not have enough cultivation power, then the formation would collapse. The disparity in cultivation power between Wang Xuanling and Lin Poyun could not be bridged by the support of Mount Shu's spiritual qi alone.

Ultimately, Wang Xuanling shouted, "Disciples of Mount Shu, retreat immediately!"

At that moment, the eyes of the Mount Shu Sect disciples turned bloodshot with rage and despair.

They understood that Wang Xuanling had decided to abandon Mount Shu so that they could survive. As long as the disciples survived, the Mount Shu Sect could rise again. However, that meant the Mount Shu Sect's several thousand years of legacy would be destroyed in an instant!

Chu Liang felt the same pain.

The peak closest to the black clouds was Red Cotton Peak. If it were engulfed by the black clouds, even the Feng-grade buildings might not be able to withstand the corrosive assault for long.

With the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, Chu Liang had the power to kill Chen Mingcang and the Elder of White-Bone Mountain, but he was powerless against a formidable cultivator like Lin Poyun.

Chu Liang knew full well that with the power he had, it was pretty much impossible for him to stop Lin Poyun. Therefore, saving the lives of his fellow disciples at the cost of Mount Shu was the best possible outcome.

It was right at this moment that a dazzling white light blasted out from Guardian Peak!

Boom!

Chapter 715: City in Peril

Guardian Peak was the mountain peak that the Mount Shu Sect had designated as the residence of their guardian celestial beast. It used to be the dwelling of the celestial beast Baize. After the great Baize disappeared, its offspring, the Baize youngling, disliked going back there, so the peak gradually fell into disuse. However, it was later revealed that Baize was on the brink of ascension and had entered a dormant state, awaiting the opportunity to advance to the ninth realm.

At the Mount Shu Summit, it was Chu Liang who had slain the vicious beast Taowu with one sword strike to protect Guardian Peak and prevent Baize from being disturbed. Six years had passed since then, and many had already forgotten about that incident.

Now, as a brilliant white light shone once more from Guardian Peak, the people present were reminded that Mount Shu still had a celestial beast, and it was at the pinnacle of the eighth realm.

With a thunderous roar, the beam of white light streaked across the sky, coming to a stop at the Grand Mountain-Protecting Formation. It was followed by an explosion of light.

Whoosh!

Countless silver rays scattered across the sky, breaking through the black clouds like the sun rising to dispel the night.

At the center of the silver light was the faint silhouette of a celestial beast. It had a dragon's head, deer's antlers, and silver scales all over. Its indistinct silhouette alone exuded a profound sense of peace and serenity.

Then the silhouette suddenly vanished, taking with it the vast black clouds that filled the sky. Appearing in its place was a tall, humanoid figure that was dressed in a beautiful white robe embroidered with gold and had a head full of long silver hair. Unlike the dull, gray hair of an elderly person, her silver hair shimmered splendidly. Though the people in the distance could not see her face clearly, they could still feel the divine brilliance radiating from her shining eyes.

This woman was Baize, the true guardian of Mount Shu.

In this moment of crisis, she leaped over from Guardian Peak and saved all thirty-six peaks of Mount Shu. The clouds in the sky were swept away, and her eyes met the eyes of the Dark King Sect's leader, Lin Poyun.

Lin Poyun stared at the divine figure before him, his gaze dark and heavy. "So, you're Baize?"

Baize did not answer. Instead, she turned her gaze toward Wang Xuanling in the distance. Wang Xuanling's eyes widened in surprise as they lit up with silver light.

A moment later, Baize muttered, "So, after the Heavenly Star Divine Cult split, the Dark King Sect fell to the diabolical path."

Then she shifted her gaze back to Lin Poyun. "So, you're the current leader of the Dark King Sect, and you possess the True Form of Ksitigarbha? Why not summon it and let me see?"

She flexed her fingers in a beckoning gesture, and the male sword spirit of the Violet and Azure Twin Swords immediately flew into her hand.

The female sword spirit hovered in midair and circled a few times, seemingly displeased. Eventually, she flew back to Chu Liang's side.

Nonetheless, it didn't matter because only Chu Liang had ever been able to wield both the Violet and Azure Twin Swords simultaneously. He was the only person who could have two systems of qi pathways after all. The higher-ups of Mount Shu had never quite figured that out though.

Lin Poyun sneered, "Even if you've reached the pinnacle of the eighth realm, it's pure delusion to think that you have the power to kill a master of the Heavenly Origin."

It would be a lie to say he didn't fear an ancient celestial beast like Baize. Nevertheless, as a genius diabolical cultivator, Lin Poyun was proud of his abilities.

"That's why I told you to try," Baize replied calmly.

She didn't wait for Lin Poyun to act. Instead, she swung the male sword spirit, the Violet Draconic Sword.

Whoosh!

A beam of white and violet swordlight flew into the air, as unassuming as a bird flying through a forest. Yet, when it reached Liu Poiyun, he felt an undeniable sense of danger.

Baize's sword qi was quite different from that of the Dao Masters controlling the three Great Daos of the Sword. It wasn't majestically swift and fierce, but it carried an unyielding resolve to kill its target.

Lacking the confidence to deflect the strike, Lin Poyun raised his arm and placed the Elder of White-Bone Mountain in the path of Baize's slash. Upon getting struck, the Elder of White-Bone Mountain lost all of his spiritual qi and became nothing more than a pile of bones.

It's the Great Dao of Yin and Yang! Lin Poyun realized.

The Great Dao that Baize controlled was the most fundamental Great Dao of the world—the Great Dao of Yin and Yang!

Unlike the Great Dao of Ultimate Yin or Ultimate Yang, the Great Dao of Yin and Yang focused on the derivation and transformation of the two universal forces—yin qi and yang qi. All things in existence, including life and death, abided by the Dao of Yin and Yang. Only an ancient celestial beast like Baize could become the master of that Great Dao.

Despite appearing unremarkable, Baize's attacks could instantly reverse life and death. They might not possess the power to kill outright, but they carried the authority to turn the living into the dead.

Even the Dark King Sect, an influential diabolical sect, found that unsettling.

Lin Poyun crushed the pile of bones in his hand. Then he waved his hand, reopening the black hole.

"Retreat!"

Under everyone's watchful eyes, Lin Poyun once again made another retreat with his remaining diabolical cultivators. His retreat was as smooth as ever thanks to all the previous times he had retreated.

Baize did not give chase. She simply stood still, watching the black hole close and vanish. Then she turned and looked at Chu Liang.

"Young man..." Baize said with a warmer tone, "I need to talk to you."

...

"I wonder how the battle over there is going?"

In Taotie City, Huyan Dong and his son, Huyan Bin, were anxiously waiting for updates. Huyan Bin kept pulling out the Circle of Immortal Friends Token from his pocket, glancing at it, then putting it back in his pocket again.

Huyan Dong couldn't hold back any longer and reprimanded him, "Stop looking at that useless thing!"

If it wasn't for Chu Liang's innovative ideas, Red Cotton Peak wouldn't have overtaken Taotie City so quickly, leaving Taotie City with barely any room to survive. That was why Huyan Dong felt angry whenever he saw the token.

"Father, this will give us faster updates!" Huyan Bin explained helplessly, wanting to justify his actions. Then he exclaimed, "Hey! They've started fighting!"

As it turned out, the moment the diabolical cultivators attacked Red Cotton Peak, someone posted about it in the Circle of Immortal Friends.

Shortly after, his face revealed a shocked expression. "Huh? Red Cotton Peak wasn't destroyed?"

Not bothering to reprimand his son anymore, Huyan Dong asked urgently, "What's going on?"

"Well..." Huyan Bin seemed to recall something. "A while ago, I think Chu Liang did some kind of reconstruction on Red Cotton Peak and upgraded the buildings. Even after receiving an attack from White-Bone Mountain, Red Cotton Peak wasn't damaged..."

Huyan Dong blinked, recalling that he had indeed seen information on that. All information about the activities on Red Cotton Peak was always delivered to his desk promptly. Naturally, such a large-scale reconstruction project had been no exception.

Nevertheless, Huyan Dong hadn't taken it seriously. They were just reconstructing the buildings. What could be so important about that?

Yet, it turned out that the reconstruction was an extremely important factor. It spelled doom for the diabolical cultivators.

"Are the diabolical cultivators the only ones taking action?" Huyan Dong asked quietly. "What about the rebels of Mount Mang?"

Huyan Bin shook his head. "I don't know..."

Right then, someone called from outside, "City Lord, Young Master Lu requests an audience!"

"What Young Master Lu..." Huyan Dong said, about to lose his temper. However, he froze mid-sentence and muttered, "Lu Jiangtong?"

After a brief moment of contemplation, he raised his hand. "Let him in!"

A man clad in a hooded black robe that covered his face entered the chamber. Once the servants were dismissed, the man lifted his hood, revealing a face that exuded malevolent qi.

It was Lu Jiangtong, the leader of Mount Mang rebels.

After the many battles they had experienced recently, the rebels of Mount Mang were no longer the ragtag army of starving people they once were. On top of the natural talents of their half-demon bloodlines, the rebels of Mount Mang now had abundant resources and cultivation manuals. They persisted with their cultivation even as they continued to fight with their lives on the line. Their relentless cultivation had allowed them to progress at an extraordinary pace.

In particular, Lu Jiangtong had made a breakthrough in his cultivation, advancing from the sixth realm to the seventh. His eyes gleamed with divine light, looking like the glowing eyes of a wolf in the night.

"What are you doing here?" Huyan Dong asked in a low voice. "If anyone finds out I'm connected to you, won't Taotie City be implicated?"

"Haha," Lu Jiangtong chuckled. "City Lord Huyan, rest assured. After today, no one will suspect any collusion between us."

Huyan Dong frowned. Raising his voice, he asked, "What do you mean? The resources and enchanted tools I gave you were for attacking Mount Shu. You shouldn't be here right now."

"I took the goods, but I don't feel like doing the job," Lu Jiangtong replied with a smirk. "City Lord, what do you think I should do?"

"You..."

Huyan Dong's eyelid twitched. He realized something was wrong.

At this moment, battle cries erupted from the city.

Huyan Dong recalled the rebels' most fearsome ability—their uncanny knack for appearing silently anywhere. This was the very reason they had been able to wreak havoc across the nine provinces without being eradicated.

He realized what was happening.

Could it be...

A thunderous crash sounded behind them as the walls of the City Lord's Residence were smashed down. Three massive demonic beasts emerged, encircling the father and son in an instant.

The City Lord's Residence had its own honored allies working as guards, but they were struggling to fend off the assaults of the fearless Mount Mang rebels. They could not spare any attention for the father and son.

Huyan Bin stood up and said furiously, "Lu Jiangtong! You're dishonorable!"

"Hahaha!" Lu Jiangtong laughed. He replied slowly, "You, the Huyan Family, are merchants. You don't have to worry about food or shelter, so you talk about honor. But we, the rebels of Mount Mang, are starving beasts..."

Chapter 716: Baize Entrusts the Youngling to...

Chu Liang followed Baize to Guardian Peak. Along the way, Baize observed the surrounding scenery and seemed to be moved by the sights.

As soon as they landed on Guardian Peak, a beam of white light shot toward them, accompanied by a cheerful cry, "Hreeoorrh!!"

Though it had been a long time since the Baize youngling last saw its mother, it immediately recognized her aura.

Baize's expression softened into a gentle smile. She stroked the Baize youngling's head and whispered a few words to it. Then she patted its back, sending it off to resume playing.

The Baize youngling turned toward Chu Liang and greeted him with its eyes before happily bounding away.

In the distance, the Baize youngling's two friends were waiting for it. Liu Xiaoyu'er stood with a flying disc in hand beside the Golden-Furred Hou.

When the Baize youngling approached, Liu Xiaoyu'er flung the flying disc into the air, and it spun off in another direction. The Baize youngling and the Golden-Furred Hou went pouncing after it, howling and roaring as they competed to catch it.

They looked just like a pair of large energetic dogs.

Seeing that, Chu Liang became a little nervous. He hurriedly cleared his throat. "Ahem, ahem. Xiaoyu, why don't you take them somewhere else to play?"

Liu Xiaoyu'er paused and then replied, "But it's almost mealtime, isn't it? Doesn't the Golden-Furred Hou come here every day to mooch off Little Baize's food?"

"Uh..." Chu Liang uttered, blinking anxiously. Then he said, "Have you finished your tasks for today? You can't play before you're done... You should get back to work."

"Red Cotton Peak is a mess right now. They told me to go." Liu Xiaoyu'er grinned. "It wasn't just me. They said Little Baize and the Golden-Furred Hou don't have to pull the flower carriage for now."

"Haha..." Chu Liang laughed sheepishly as he glanced at Baize. "The Golden-Furred Hou... sure, but when did we ever have Little Baize pull a flower carriage at Red Cotton Peak..."

"Every day, of course," Liu Xiaoyu'er replied earnestly. "Wasn't it something you arranged before you left? We've never slacked off!"

Chu Liang hurriedly waved her off. "Oh, just go play already!"

This kid really doesn't know how to read the situation at all.

When he turned back to Baize, she still wore a bright smile, radiating divine brilliance like a benevolent Bodhisattva statue in a temple.

Chu Liang felt quite uneasy. "Esteemed Senior Baize... Please, let me explain. This isn't—"

"I understand." Baize nodded slightly. "I can see how much my child adores you, and I know of the story between you two. My child was all alone... Meeting you has brought my child much joy."

Chu Liang recalled what had happened earlier when she landed on Red Cotton Peak. She had looked at Wang Xuanling, and his eyes lit up with silver light.

He thought, Could it be that this noble celestial beast is capable of reading people's thoughts and memories at will? That's kind of terrifying.

"I cannot," Baize said.

Oh, that's a relief...

Chu Liang finally exhaled, feeling at ease.

Then he furrowed his brows, realizing something there had to be more to it than that.

Gazing at Baize, he uttered puzzledly, "Huh?"

"The innate mystical ability of a Baize is to comprehend the changes in the yin and yang and discern the chains of cause and effect in the world," Baize explained with a smile. "It is fundamentally different from probing someone's mind."

Hearing that, Chu Liang finally understood the difference.

For example, when Baize saw diabolical cultivators attacking Mount Shu, she discerned the cause and effect by observing those who were aware of the event. From there, she pieced together the whole story. Similarly, when Baize saw Chu Liang hesitate, she could understand the reason behind his hesitation.

However, if there was no effect, she could not trace the cause. It was indeed different from soul-probing skills that read memories directly.

Chu Liang smiled and praised Baize, "Esteemed Senior, your divine abilities are truly admirable."

He further concealed his fear of Baize, afraid she might sense it. That fear stemmed primarily from what Caiyi had told him.

Could it really be that Baize released the Demon God?

Nevertheless, Chu Liang did not dare to ask such a question, as it might easily expose the fact that he was harboring the Heaven-Devouring Bug. What if Baize truly intended to bring back the Demon God? She might even take action against Chu Liang.

With that complicated train of thought in his mind, Chu Liang worked hard to maintain a composed expression.

"I found out earlier that you slayed Taowu with one sword strike to protect Guardian Peak. You did a great service to me. I must thank you for that," Baize said softly. "It is unfortunate I couldn't continue my slumber until the Great Dao provided an opportunity for ascension."

Her "slumber" naturally referred to the dormant state she had entered because she was on the brink of ascending.

After the news spread that Baize had been sleeping inside Guardian Peak, Chu Liang did some research into that.

When the world's only Hallowed One, a ninth-realm cultivator, fell, the Great Dao of the Heavens and the Earth would provide an opportunity for there to be a new Hallowed One by making the one spot in the Profound Realm vacant.

All cultivators at the pinnacle of the eighth-realm would then have a chance to ascend to the ninth realm. It was just a matter of who would successfully fuse with the Great Dao first and stand at the top of the world. And the best method to achieve that was to enter a dormant state and seek enlightenment.

Before the opportunity arose, those eighth-realm cultivators would repeatedly attempt to fuse with the Great Dao. Then on the day when the opportunity suddenly arose, the eighth-realm Eminent One that ascended first would become the new Hallowed One.

Those eighth-realm Eminent Ones on the brink of ascension were like a group of people waiting outside a door to grab tickets. They would all try incessantly to open the door, vying to be the lucky one to enter first. If someone was slow or careless, they might miss their chance, even if their cultivation power was stronger than that of the others.

In terms of comprehending the Great Dao, humans always had an advantage over demonic beasts, as it was easier for them to enter an enlightened state. Thus, demonic beasts on the brink of ascending to the ninth realm typically choose to enter a long period of dormancy to seek enlightenment, whereas human cultivators at the same level rarely opted for the same approach.

Meanwhile, there were some people that believed eliminating their competition meant their success would be ensured. For example, Lu Chengchou had gone to Mount Shu to disturb Baize's slumber. The higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect later speculated that it might have been orchestrated by someone else on the brink of ascending to the ninth realm.

"It's a pity that the members of the diabolical sect disrupted your slumber, Esteemed Senior."

"No." Baize shook her head. "I didn't wake up because of the diabolical sect's raid. In truth, if there had been a genuine opportunity for me to become a Hallowed One, I would never have prioritized the Mount Shu Sect. I would not have abandoned that chance for Mount Shu."

Chu Liang thought that made sense. If any Mount Shu disciple were given a choice between saving the sect and a chance to reach the ninth realm, they would undoubtedly choose the latter. It wasn't a surprise that Baize would do the same.

"I woke up because, for the time being, there simply won't be an opportunity for anyone to ascend to the ninth realm," Baize said. She fell silent for a moment before adding, "I just learned that the Demon God is not dead."

Her expression conveyed her disappointment.

Chu Liang, on the other hand, forced himself to remain calm; he was getting a bit nervous.

Did this guardian celestial beast ask me to stay behind because she already figured out the connection between the Demon God and the Heaven-Devouring Bug?

Baize continued, "My life force is running out. I may no longer have the chance to see that day."

At the mention of her approaching end, even this incredibly powerful being that stood at the top of the world looked quite sad and lonely.

Hearing Baize sigh deeply, Chu Liang wanted to offer her some solace, but he did not know what to say.

"Esteemed Senior..."

"The day of my passing is no more than two centuries away, maybe three at most. It's time that I make arrangements for what comes after."

This time, Chu Liang fell silent.

Uh, sure.

You're nearing the end of your lifespan, while I'm still in my prime. But if you put in a little effort, you may even outlive me.

What's the point of me comforting you? It's hard to say who will be arranging whose funeral affairs by the end.

Of course, Chu Liang understood where Baize was coming from. For a celestial beast that had lived for tens of thousands of years, two or three centuries would indeed go past in a flash. So, it was understandable that Baize felt that her life force was running out.

"Sometime later, I may enter the Divine Ruins to seek one final opportunity to ascend, even if there's only a sliver of hope that I will succeed," Baize said, gazing into the distance. "If I fail, I will likely perish there. Before that, I wish to leave the legacy of the Great Dao of Yin and Yang at Mount Shu."

So that's... what she wanted to talk to me about?

Chu Liang could roughly guess her intentions.

Perhaps in a few decades or a century, Baize would venture into the Divine Ruins. Before that, she would ensure that the Great Dao of Yin and Yang would remain with the Mount Shu Sect instead of being passed onto an outsider. However, it was unlikely the Baize youngling would have reached the pinnacle of the seventh realm by then, so that meant it was necessary for a disciple of Mount Shu to inherit that Great Dao.

"The Great Dao of Yin and Yang is one of the Great Dao that's most similar to the essence of the Heavenly Dao. Comprehending it is no easy task, and extraordinary talent is required," Baize said. "If you're okay with it, I hope you can try comprehending this Great Dao. That way, when I'm gone, Mount Shu's Great Dao of Yin and Yang will not be left without a Dao Master before my child grows up. When you reach the end of your lifespan, you can pass it back to my child."

Chu Liang quickly nodded. "I will do my utmost to comprehend it, Esteemed Senior. You've put such great trust in me—I do not dare to disappoint you."

He had advanced to the seventh realm using the Great Dao of Severing the Void. However, that path was traditionally dominated by the Endless Sword Sect, so the competition would be incredibly fierce. That meant he had to explore alternative paths. Why would he possibly refuse now that one was being offered to him?

Furthermore, the Great Dao in question was the Great Dao of Yin and Yang. Chu Liang had just witnessed Baize use it earlier. It had intimidated Lin Poyun, who possessed a legendary artifact. While Lin Poyun had likely been wary that the Mount Shu Sect's other powerful cultivators would return, there was no doubt that Baize's divine skill had frightened Lin Poyun into retreating.

Comprehending the Great Dao of Yin and Yang would undoubtedly be challenging, but that was the only disadvantage of cultivating this Great Dao. On the other hand, the only advantage of cultivating some of the simpler Great Daos was that they were easier to comprehend; all the other aspects were disadvantages.

Baize nodded and pointed her finger at Chu Liang. "All right."

Whoosh.

A thread of divine light shot over to his head, and a seed of the Great Dao appeared in Chu Liang's mind.

It was the Yin-Yang Seed.

This was one of the powers that a Dao Master possessed. It allowed them to plant a seed of their Great Dao in another person's mind. Nevertheless, it was merely a starting point for comprehending the Great Dao. The rest would depend on the person's efforts.

After finishing his conversation with Baize, Chu Liang returned to Red Cotton Peak to check on the situation. A cold wind blew as he walked, sending chills down his spine.

Although he had maintained his composure during that conversation, he had actually felt extremely nervous. He still couldn't fully trust Baize and did not dare to disclose much to her. It was better for him to wait for Venerable Wen Yuan to return and make the final decisions.

Before returning to Mount Shu earlier, Chu Liang had avoided announcing his return in the Circle of Immortal Friends out of fear that people from the Penglai Supreme Sect might discover his whereabouts. As a result, Venerable Wen Yuan and the others were also unaware of his whereabouts.

However, news of the diabolical sect's attack on Red Cotton Peak and Chu Liang's spectacular feat of slaying the Northern Abyss Hall Master had already spread to the immortal sects through the Circle of Immortal Friends. Since Venerable Wen Yuan and his esteemed teacher had tokens as well, they should now be aware of the situation and would likely return to Mount Shu soon.

Chu Liang had assumed that Venerable Wen Yuan would gather allies and make thorough preparations before heading to the Far West. He hadn't expected that Venerable Wen Yuan's group would charge in alone, with their allies gradually rushing over after. It seemed Chu Liang had underestimated how important he was to Venerable Wen Yuan.

After some thought, Chu Liang took out his token and shared an official announcement.

I'm back.

Chapter 717: It Won't Happen Again

Boom!

At this moment, the peaceful era that had lasted for thousands of years in the Far West was already gone.

Since neither side used legendary artifacts, the eighth-realm cultivators could at most determine who's stronger, as it was very difficult for eighth-realm cultivators to kill each other. And so, the battle between the allies of the Mount Shu Sect and the demon kings ended up being evenly matched.

Among the Seven Great Demon Kings, Caiyi and Changfeng were the least experienced, and their cultivation powers were considered the weakest.

However, Caiyi's extraordinary talent allowed her to rise above expectations, making her just as strong as the veteran demon kings who had survived the era of the Demon God. Still, her Great Dao of Myriad Forms, which focused on transformation, made her less effective in combat.

The demon king that was the strongest in combat was the Black Golden Crow, the Demon King of the Desolate Plains. With its wings spread wide and black flames surging, each strike forced multiple masters of the Heavenly Origin to retreat, drawing all attention to its overwhelming power.

However, the humans who had attained the Heavenly Origin were incredibly powerful. Each of them was a force to be reckoned with. Among them, Zhao Liuting, the Heavenly Strategist of the Celestial King Sect, and Yan Dahu, from the Great Astral Sect stood out the most. Like an unstoppable pair of fists, they charged into the ranks of the demon kings, striking left and right without meeting any worthy challengers.

Most notably, Venerable Wen Yuan, positioned at the center, controlled the battlefield with the Great Dao of Primordial Chaos. His precise maneuvers often resulted in one of the more powerful demon kings being surrounded by two or three human cultivators. The demons were constantly in danger.

Such chaotic battles among masters of the Heavenly Origin occurred only once in centuries, and wherever they happened, it was pure misfortune for whoever lived there. After just a few

exchanges, none of the eighth-realm Eminent Ones had been injured, but the demon territories below were utterly devastated—leveled at best or reduced to rubble entirely.

Large numbers of demonic creatures began fleeing in all directions, scattering in chaos. Among them were many demons from the Verdant Foxhills, and some even disguised themselves among humans.

Watching her centuries of effort reduced to ruins, Caiyi felt as though her heart was being torn apart. Yet, this was exactly what Venerable Wen Yuan had intended, and she was powerless to stop it.

Di Nufeng, well aware of her own capabilities, didn't join the chaos in the sky at the start of the battle. Instead, she charged directly into the horde of demons below.

The divine envoys fleeing from the temple met her head-on and were instantly struck down. Empowered by the divine Samadhi True Fire, she annihilated them almost entirely with just a few punches and kicks.

Di Nufeng's combat style was highly aggressive and extreme. Though she would be helpless against powerful eighth-realm cultivators who could counter her techniques, she unleashed her chaotic attacks with devastating effect on seventh-realm cultivators and below, who had no means of defending against her.

With that relentless series of attacks, she fought her way into the temple below.

By now, there were no more divine envoys inside—only a massive purple serpent remained, barely clinging to life as it struggled to heal itself within an illusion.

"Heh?" Di Nufeng's eyes gleamed with excitement. "Looks like I've found a big one!"

The massive serpent was none other than Changfeng, who was desperately battling against Daoist Cangsheng's divine skill. As Di Nufeng barged in, he sensed her presence and forcibly broke free from the illusion. However, the moment he got out of the illusion, the torment of the Great Dao of Infinity struck him again. His soul was wracked with unbearable pain, both inside and out, leaving him in utter agony.

Di Nufeng was never one to concern herself with whether she was exploiting a demon's misfortune. In fact, her strategy for years had been to target the old, weak, sick, and injured, mercilessly

unleashing her full fury on anyone who seemed defenseless. At this moment, Changfeng had lost a significant portion of his life force, so he fit all four categories perfectly.

If the other demon kings were to return and heal his injuries, replenishing his lost lifespan, Di Nufeng would certainly stand no chance against him. But for now, there was no one to save him.

When the serpent leaves the mountain, it's at the mercy of phoenix[1].

Bam!

In an instant, the Samadhi True Fire erupted as Di Nufeng's fist struck the critical point of the massive serpent.

The resounding blow sent tremors through Changfeng's entire body, forcing a thunderous roar of fury from him. "AAAAARGH!"

Changfeng unleashed an attack with the Great Dao of Severed Breath, sending a gust of powerful Bifeng into Di Nufeng. The moment it struck, she was overwhelmed by a sense of impending doom, as though death was closing in. Yet, with a swift adjustment, she channeled the Samadhi True Fire through her body, instantly purging the invading Bifeng.

This fight ultimately hinged on the strength of their cultivation energy. Under normal circumstances, Changfeng would have held the upper hand. However, in his weakened state, he was no match for Di Nufeng's relentless and ruthless assault. She fully exploited his vulnerability!

Bam!

Changfeng attempted to rise and flee, but Di Nufeng threw another punch, violently slamming him back to the ground.

Changfeng fought back. His relentless counterattacks were accompanied by a fierce, chilling wind howled through the air as they struck Di Nufeng.

Di Nufeng's meridians took a heavy hit, and blood trickled from the corner of her lips. Nevertheless, as a physical cultivator at the Dao Attainment Realm, her corporeal body was strong and tough. She endured Changfeng's attacks and struck again with another powerful punch!

Bam!

With three crushing punches, Di Nufeng left Changfeng completely defeated. He lay motionless, and his Dao essence was barely holding together.

With Changfeng's cultivation falling apart, Di Nufeng's excitement only grew. She swung her arms like hammers, entering her usual pile-driving mode.

Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam!

Inside the Demon God Temple, deafening explosions reverberated, accompanied by violet-golden sparks of divine fire scattering through the air. Even the slightest contact with a spark would cause an ordinary demonic beast to burst apart and die instantly.

Only after a long while did the smoke finally begin to clear.

Beneath the Demon God statue, Di Nufeng clutched a scale and lifted the lifeless head of the massive serpent. Her face, smeared with blood, twisted into a menacing grin. "You've only got yourselves to blame for messing with my disciple. In your next life, try to be smarter when stirring up trouble. Hee-hee-hee..."

"Chu Liang... We saved Chu Liang and..." Changfeng, struggling for breath, forced out a few words. "He already escaped..."

"Tch," Di Nufeng scoffed, sneering. "Do you think I'm a three-year-old? I'll give you one last chance. Tell me where my disciple is, and I'll spare your life. Otherwise, don't blame this grandaunt for being ruthless."

"He... he really did escape..." Changfeng muttered, full of grievance.

"Still clinging to your lies!"

Di Nufeng's pupils narrowed as violet-golden divine fire erupted, instantly engulfing the serpent's head. In mere moments, the serpent's head was reduced to nothing, leaving behind only a massive headless snake body that twisted and turned in pain.

After slaying the eighth-realm Demon King of the Great Marshlands, Di Nufeng staggered back a few steps. Leaning against the temple wall, she let out a long, relieved breath.

Though she had fought Changfeng when he had been in a vulnerable state, this was undeniably one of the most dangerous fights of her life. What seemed like an easy win could have easily ended in defeat if Changfeng had gained the slightest advantage.

If Changfeng's remaining cultivation energy had been just ten percent stronger, her divine fire might not have been enough to suppress his Bifeng. Before she could incinerate his body, the Bifeng would have already torn through her internal organs.

The difference was simply that one had internal injuries while the other had external wounds. This made Di Nufeng's injuries less noticeable, but in reality, she was in just as dangerous a situation as Changfeng had been a moment ago, teetering on the edge of life and death.

Now that she had calmed down to evaluate her condition, she realized that her Sea of Qi, Dantian, and even her soul and internal organs had sustained severe damage. Injuries of this severity were rare, even in her nearly a hundred years of traversing the martial world.

Still, she had managed to slay a powerful eighth-realm demon king—a feat even Venerable Wen Yuan had not accomplished. From now on, who in Mount Shu would dare to look down on her? As for that old man Wang Xuanling, he wouldn't even be worthy of sitting at the same table as her anymore. If she took the main seat, he'd have to settle for eating at the disciples' table.

At this thought, Di Nufeng's lips curled into a smug grin, and her signature laughter echoed once more through the temple. "Hee-hee-hee..."

Just then, she felt the Circle of Immortal Friends Token in her pouch vibrating furiously. She hadn't noticed it during the battle, but now she pulled it out and scanned it with her divine sense, only to find a flood of new messages.

The messages read:

Diabolical cultivators attacked Red Cotton Peak but caused almost no damage. Chu Liang returned to Mount Shu, wielding the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, and killed the master of the Northern Abyss Hall of the diabolical sect. The leader of the Dark King Sect appeared but was driven away by the awakened Baize...

Di Nufeng couldn't help but exclaim in surprise, "Oh, so it's true."

She glanced at the remains of the serpent and hesitated for a moment. Then she murmured, "Sorry for blaming you wrongly. It won't happen again."

Chapter 718: The Evil Heart Curse

Although Chu Liang had already endured plenty of surprises that day, he was once again astonished when news reached him that Taotie City had been breached by the rebels of Mount Mang.

Taotie City, after all, was one of the Terrestrial Ten. While its cultivation legacy wasn't particularly strong, the city was home to countless powerful honored allies. How could it have fallen to a mere group of rebels?

If the rebels of Mount Mang were truly that powerful, they could easily rise to become one of the new factions in the Terrestrial Ten. There would be no reason for them to remain mere outlaws.

After all, there was the story of how the outlaws wreaked havoc, killing and burning, until the imperial court could no longer suppress them and was forced to recognize and accept them into its ranks[1].

This story would be a perfect example of how when people were weak, they were labeled a rebel. But if they became strong enough, they would naturally be deemed righteous.

As more detailed information arrived, Chu Liang finally pieced together the full picture.

Taotie City originally had many powerful honored allies. Although no large-scale battles had occurred there for centuries, the city's immense wealth allowed it to sustain this large but mostly idle force. Typically, these honored allies were only tasked with managing city security, as there was little need for such a massive contingent.

However, after lending a large sum of money to the Penglai Supreme Sect a few days earlier, Taotie City faced financial strain. To sustain its high expenditures and keep the market running, they had to

cut costs. After some deliberation, Huyan Dong decided to start with the largely unused honored allies, dismissing most of them.

This was the consequence of having a weak foundation. Those who joined for money would eventually leave for money.

Even so, the forces remaining in the Taotie City were still powerful, allowing the Taotie City to keep its place in the Terrestrial Ten. However, after copying Red Cotton Peak's delivery service and having Qi Lin'er ambush Red Cotton Peak's teams, Huyan Dong grew worried. He feared that the Mount Shu Sect wouldn't dare to provoke the Penglai Supreme Sect but might instead retaliate against Taotie City. Thus, he deployed a large number of additional personnel to escort their teams of couriers.

This act of projecting his own petty mindset onto others only pushed the city further into financial ruin.

Even so, the city's remaining guard force should have been more than enough to handle an ordinary level of unrest. But the rebels of Mount Mang were no longer the same; they seemed to have gained significant reinforcements.

In the beginning, the rebels of Mount Mang were nothing more than a ragtag group of starving half-demons. However, they somehow managed to acquire cultivation manuals and resources. After a few battles, they even obtained fine weapons and enchanted tools. It was as if everything they needed had fallen from the heavens, and the speed at which their forces grew stronger was utterly bewildering.

Chu Liang couldn't help but wonder if they possessed a White Pagoda capable of giving rewards and equipment too.

Furthermore, some of the Mount Mang rebels had transformed into demons. Even though such a transformation would result in them progressing slower in their cultivation, they would have even more enhanced physiques, which would give them a significant boost in short-term combat effectiveness.

This team of humans and demons had breached the gates of Taotie City just like that.

After entering the city, the rebels' strategy was vastly different from the chaotic assault carried out by the diabolical cultivators on Red Cotton Peak.

When the diabolical cultivators attacked Mount Shu, they used indiscriminate slaughter to cause chaos. But that only united the cultivators, who worked together to form a strong resistance and wipe them out.

In contrast, after breaking into the city, the rebels of Mount Mang focused their attacks on the City Lord's Residence and a few key shops owned by Taotie City. They targeted only the honored allies, leaving the visitors unharmed.

As a result, the city's customers became bystanders, with many even taking the opportunity to join the rebels, looting and stealing under the guise of a "free-for-all" shopping spree.

Taotie City, which once aspired to compete with the Divine Nine, was truly overrun by the rebels of Mount Mang.

Huyan Dong and his son Huyan Bin went missing, presumed to have been captured by the rebels.

After reading the news, Chu Liang couldn't help but sigh. Indeed, villains are always subdued by greater villains.

Qi Lin'er is already dead, so the blame for ambushing Red Cotton Peak's convoy can no longer be pinned on Taotie City. But they ended up facing retribution on their own.

Hmm?

At the thought of Qi Lin'er, Chu Liang suddenly remembered there was still something he hadn't done.

...

The last time he was in the Sea of Demons, Chu Liang had slain numerous sea demons, but he hadn't yet taken the time to reward himself.

Upon returning to Mount Shu, he had to go to Penglai for Qi Lin'er's matter. After killing Qi Lin'er, he had unexpectedly obtained an imprint, which he still hadn't refined.

Now that everything had settled down, he could finally relax in his small room and properly unbox all the rewards.

And this time, he planned to refine dozens of imprints in one go.

Among the imprints stored in a row of iron cells, Chu Liang first approached the one belonging to Qi Lin'er, which resembled a stubborn, unyielding stone. He was, of course, most curious about what this imprint might yield.

Without hesitation, he raised his hand and pressed the word "Refine."

Boom!

A flash of brilliance appeared, and a talisman-like light floated into the air.

[Evil Heart Curse: It can release the evil within a person's heart, lasting for fifteen minutes. If used against cultivators whose cultivation level was a full realm higher, it is ineffective and carries the risk of backlash.]

Chu Liang read the description and pondered for a moment. "This..."

It sounded like another divine skill manipulating emotions and desires. He had previously acquired the Evil-Dispelling Spell and the Chain of Resentment, both of which proved incredibly useful when used appropriately.

As for the effectiveness of this Evil Heart Curse, it would depend on the extent of its influence.

He didn't rush to test it and instead began refining the imprints of the sea demons.

Boom!

The first imprint from a sea demon yielded a perfectly round sphere of brilliance.

[Sea Soul Stone: A top-quality material mined from Sea Soul Mountain, capable of calming storms and quelling waves.]

Chu Liang rubbed the stone in his palm. It looked like a smooth and round blue-purple pebble. Upon closer inspection, he detected this hidden, powerful spiritual energy.

It was said that the sea itself possessed a spirit, and its essence gathered to form Sea Soul Mountain, located at the deepest point of the East Sea. However, this was just a legend; no one had ever seen the so-called Sea Soul Mountain.

Judging by the description of the Sea Soul Stone, such a place might actually exist.

Chu Liang then retrieved the Azure Wave Lamp from his belongings. Due to not having enough cultivation power, it had been hard for him to control this enchanted tool that ranked among the top hundred treasures in the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures. But now, he could handle it with ease.

As he activated the tool with a mere thought, azure waves surged forth, rippling across a space before him. Chu Liang then tossed the Sea Soul Stone into the restless waters.

Plop.

The Azure Wave Lamp was immensely powerful, but as soon as the Sea Soul Stone sank into the waves, the turbulence was instantly suppressed, leaving the surface calm and still.

However, the range that a single Sea Soul Stone could suppress was limited. Once Chu Liang expanded the area covered by the Azure Wave Lamp, the Sea Soul Stone became ineffective.

It seemed the spiritual energy contained within this stone was indeed finite.

With this thought in mind, Chu Liang proceeded to refine another imprint harvested from another sea demon.

Boom!

Once again, a perfectly round sphere of brilliance appeared.

Chu Liang frowned. "Another Sea Soul Stone?"

Just because I said one stone's spiritual energy was limited doesn't mean you need to give me another one! Chu Liang complained inwardly.

While having an extra stone wasn't necessarily a problem, this trend was starting to seem a bit concerning...

Sure enough, moments later, Chu Liang found himself holding a large pile of Sea Soul Stones.

This made him fall into deep thought.

Previously, when he slayed a shrimp soldier and a crab general, the rewards he refined from their imprints were different, indicating that sea demons had unique attributes and yielded varied rewards.

However, the sea demons in the Sea of Demons, despite their diverse appearances, all produced identical Sea Soul Stones upon refinement.

If it were before, he might not have understood this, but recalling Daoist Cangsheng's remarks about the essence of life, he began to faintly grasp the reason.

When the White Pagoda produced identical rewards, it likely indicated that the evil entities shared the same essence of life. For ordinary evil entities with different origins, their essence of life naturally varied.

The identical rewards from the Sea of Demons' sea demons indicated that their essence of life was the same, suggesting they had most likely been created by someone!

He had once asked Wuzhiqi about the identity of the master of this hidden realm, the Sea of Demons, but Wuzhiqi had remained silent. Whoever had created those sea demons was undoubtedly a being of extraordinary and terrifying power.

Stashing away the pile of relatively useless stones, Chu Liang decided to test the power of the Evil Heart Curse.

As soon as he opened the door, Chu Liang saw Shang Ziliang, along with Lackey A and Lackey B, descending from the sky to report on the cleanup situation at Red Cotton Peak.

"You explain," Shang Ziliang said, gesturing for Lackey A to provide the details as soon as he saw Chu Liang.

"Hehe..." Lackey A chuckled awkwardly and was just about to start.

Chu Liang subtly raised his hand and cast the Evil Heart Curse.

Whoosh!

Lackey A's expression froze suddenly. A sinister grin crept across his face as a shadow with horns seemed to emerge from behind him.

"Hee-hee-hee! In the end, it's always me who has to step up, isn't it? I've been saying it all along—one of you just eats, and the other lazes around. When it really counts, I'm the one who shines! Boss, if you can't handle it, why not just go back to Cloud Horizon Peak and run your family business? Leave Red Cotton Peak to me. From now on, whatever you can't handle, I'll take care of it; whoever you can't deal with, I'll deal with them; and that Junior Sister Ziqing you can't win over, I'll win her over!"

Whoosh!

When the effect of the Evil Heart Curse wore off, Lackey A suddenly clapped his hands over his mouth, his eyes wide with terror. "What... what did I just say?"

"You said it all..." Shang Ziliang's face darkened. "Forget the rest, but to think you had... feelings for Junior Sister Ziqing? Truly unexpected."

"I... didn't..." Lackey A stammered, panic written all over his face.

Shang Ziliang was about to say more, but Chu Liang flicked his finger once again.

Whoosh!

This time, it was Shang Ziliang's turn. His expression froze, and then a sinister smirk crept across his face.

"Hee-hee-hee..." Shang Ziliang sneered. "You think I chose you two as lackeys because I valued you? No! It's just that no one else wanted to be my lackeys, so I picked the two dumbest guys from Cloud Horizon Peak. Now that I'm bringing you success, you think it's because of your talent? It's all thanks to me! If you know what's good for you, you'll cling to my coattails obediently. Otherwise, once my influence grows, I can replace lackeys like you by the hundreds at any time!"

Fifteen minutes later, Shang Ziliang suddenly snapped back to his senses. "Huh? What just happened?"

Lackey A's eyes brimmed with tears as he responded, "Boss, so that's why you picked us?"

Lackey B tried to say something to mediate, but suddenly, there was another flash of light.

Whoosh!

He trembled all over, and his friendly smile twisted into a sinister grin.

"I've always wanted to cook Boss's mount and eat it! And those spirit birds you raise? I've been dying to roast them! I want to turn all the spirit birds on Mount Shu into hot pot... Hee-hee-hee!"

Chapter 719: I'll Count to Three

Whoosh!

A mighty wind swept across the Far West, carrying a surge of yellow sand that resembled an invading sandstorm. In reality, this was caused by the earlier battle, which had been so intense that it shattered thousands of li of the surrounding land.

After confirming that Chu Liang had indeed returned to Mount Shu, the human cultivators, led by Venerable Wen Yuan, decided to let it go. It was unrealistic to think they could kill the remaining

eighth-realm demon kings. While they could unleash their full power to wipe out all the lesser demons in sight, doing so would leave the demon kings free to act without restraint.

If the demon kings retaliated with destructive attacks on human cities, even the powerful human cultivators would find it difficult to manage.

Thus, after fighting to the point where the land of the Far West was left in ruins, the humans chose to retreat.

What remained was an even more desolate, blood-soaked wasteland. The Verdant Foxhills bore the worst of the devastation, with the villages Caiyi had spent centuries building now lying in ruins.

Made of strong materials, the Mountain Range of the Seven Kings was not destroyed. Even though the temple on top faced a fiery attack from Di Nufeng, it withstood the attack. After all, this was the place of worship for the demons and would not be so easily burnt to ashes.

However, Changfeng, who had been in the temple, was nowhere to be found.

Glancing at the surrounding Samadhi True Fire, it wasn't hard to deduce that he had likely fallen at the hands of Di Nufeng from Mount Shu.

After performing a divination, the Great High Priest confirmed that Changfeng's soul had been destroyed.

Another one of the few remaining powerful demon kings had fallen!

Such losses were unheard of in millennia.

The other demon kings turned their sharp gazes toward Caiyi.

"All dealings with the humans were led by the Demon King of the Verdant Foxhills," roared the Demon King of Mount Thunder. "Now that such a disaster has happened, you cannot shirk responsibility!"

"Has the Demon King of the Verdant Foxhills spent so much time among humans that you've taken their side now?" the Demon King of the Desolate Plains remarked coldly. "You couldn't even keep track of a single disciple from the Mount Shu Sect. This failure is entirely your fault."

The Great High Priest didn't say a word, but his gaze at Caiyi was equally full of disappointment.

Faced with the scolding from the demon kings, Caiyi remained silent. She simply stood up and said, "If there's nothing else, I'll return to my territory. Although everything has been destroyed, rebuilding will surely be easier than starting anew."

"Tch." The Demon King of the Abyss of Wrath sneered. "You still foolishly believe you can use human tools to defeat humans?"

"I think you've completely lost your mind," the Demon King of the Desolate Plains said loudly.

Caiyi turned away from the crowd without a word and flew straight back to her territory, the Verdant Foxhills. The home she had painstakingly built over the years had now been reduced to ruins, left in a state of desolation.

Yet, her expression remained calm. Standing atop a high mountain, she silently scanned the area with her divine sense, searching for any surviving members of the Verdant Foxhills demon clan.

Sensing her presence, the members of the Fox Clan and other demon clans that were in hiding slowly began to gather towards her. Before long, a group of demonic creatures had gathered before her.

At that moment, a streak of light descended from the distant sky.

The streak of light landed onto the hillside with a swoosh, revealing a figure in black Daoist robes.

It was Daoist Xuan Lu from Penglai Supreme Sect.

Having just experienced a fierce battle with human cultivators, all the demonic creatures harbored deep hostility toward humans. They glared at him with sharp, resentful gazes.

Only Caiyi remained calm. She raised a hand, gesturing for the demons to stand down and signaling them to let Daoist Xuan Lu approach.

Caiyi's understanding of humans was enough to distinguish the clear divisions among their factions. She knew that Daoist Xuan Lu was not part of the group that had attacked the Far West earlier.

The enemy of her enemy could serve as an ally, even if that "ally" happened to be the main instigator of Changfeng's death.

"Demon King of the Verdant Foxhills, greetings to you," Daoist Xuan Lu said with a polite smile. "It seems this place has just experienced a fierce battle. Are you alright?"

"Not too bad," Caiyi replied with a faint smile. "What brings you here, Daoist Xuan Lu?"

"You know me?" Daoist Xuan Lu asked, slightly surprised.

Among the prominent figures of Penglai, he was relatively inexperienced and not widely recognized. It seemed the Demon King of the Verdant Foxhills had a far deeper understanding of the humans and the sects of immortality cultivation than he had anticipated.

"Among the newly promoted Eminent Ones of the Penglai Supreme Sect, Daoist Cangsheng values you the most." Caiyi chuckled softly. "It's only natural that your reputation precedes you."

"Not at all, not at all," Daoist Xuan Lu said quickly, waving his hands dismissively. He then added, "I'm here under the orders of our sect leader to discuss a matter with you and the other demon kings."

"Please, speak freely," Caiyi replied with remarkable generosity.

Daoist Xuan Lu said, "When you two took Chu Liang, the Demon King of the Great Marshlands was struck by the Curse of the Flowing Golden Immortal that my sect's leader cast using the East Sea Chrono Wheel. By now, I am sure you are aware of the power of this curse. Apart from our sect leader himself, no one else can remove the curse to save the Demon King of the Great Marshlands."

Looking at Caiyi, Daoist Xuan Lu continued, "We don't know why you took Chu Liang, but surely he isn't more important to your demon race than an eighth-realm demon king. Our sect leader

proposes this: hand Chu Liang over to Penglai, and he will lift the curse on the Demon King of the Great Marshlands."

Caiyi gazed silently in the direction where the army of human cultivators had departed moments ago, remaining quiet for a long time.

After a moment of silence, she finally spoke, "Daoist Xuan Lu, if someone wanted to trade the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda for your great-grandfather, would you agree?"

Daoist Xuan Lu was taken aback, unable to grasp her meaning. "My great-grandfather passed away long ago... and wasn't the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda from Mount Shu lost centuries ago?"

"Exactly." Caiyi said with a sigh.

What's the point of such a trade now...

This isn't just being slow—it's being so late it doesn't even matter anymore.

By the time you want the fertilizer, it's already grown crops in someone else's field. It was far too late.

"But..." She shifted her gaze. "I am curious, though. What does your sect leader want with Chu Liang? Don't tell me it's something like avenging an illegitimate child. I'm not a three-year-old."

...

"I'll count to fucking three!"

"Oh, come on, don't throw a tantrum."

"..."

In the Boundless Palace on Mount Shu, the Violet and Azure Twin Swords caused yet another commotion. When Venerable Wen Yuan returned, the two swords were brought here.

The conflict started because the male sword spirit had fought alongside Baize, which greatly displeased the female sword spirit.

She demanded that Venerable Wen Yuan evict the male sword spirit from Sword Sheath Peak and move him to Guardian Peak. From then on, Sword Sheath Peak would belong to her alone.

"Time to go our separate ways!" she said.

As Venerable Wen Yuan watched the two sword spirits quarrel, he felt this throbbing headache. Many legendary artifacts had spirits, but none of those artifact spirits were as lively as these two sword spirits of the Mount Shu Sect.

Each generation of Mount Shu Sect's leaders had to take on the burden of mediating their never-ending marital squabbles.

At this moment, Chu Liang's voice came from outside, requesting to see Venerable Wen Yuan.

"Chu Liang, come in quickly," Venerable Wen Yuan called out. "You get along with them. Say something and settle their arguments."

"Huh?"

Immediately, Chu Liang felt his head throb as well. He had just finished mediating a fight between the three young ones of Cloud Horizon Peak at the Silver Sword Peak. Why did he have to mediate an argument here too?

That earlier incident was entirely his fault. He had learned the hard way not to experiment casually with the Evil Heart Curse. But this matter had nothing to do with him!

Looking at the bickering Violet and Azure Twin Swords, Chu Liang could only try to explain, "Esteemed Senior Azure, there's absolutely no possibility of Esteemed Senior Violet having an affair with Baize."

The female sword spirit raised an eyebrow. "An' how d'ya know, kid?"[1]

Chu Liang fell silent for a moment.

How exactly does one prove that a sword and a celestial beast can't have an affair? Is this really so difficult?

After some thought, he spoke earnestly, "Because I know that Baize doesn't have much life force left. Everything she does is solely for the protection of the Mount Shu Sect. Esteemed Senior Azure, in the face of such a formidable enemy, she—an aging mother—still rose to defend Mount Shu. How could the two of you, the most powerful guardian artifacts of Mount Shu, stand idly by?"

"Exactly," the male sword spirit chimed in.

The female sword spirit was startled by the news. "Baize is... dying?"

She immediately thought of her prejudice against Baize and felt she had been excessively harsh, sinking into deep guilt.

"That's correct," Chu Liang said, turning back to Venerable Wen Yuan. "I have an important matter to report. It's about Baize!"

Chapter 720: Old Man, Come Out and Show Me the Way

Now that Chu Liang was facing Venerable Wen Yuan, he could momentarily let his guard down.

After spending a significant amount of time with Venerable Wen Yuan, Chu Liang had come to trust him. In some ways, Venerable Wen Yuan had filled part of the void left by Chu Liang's esteemed teacher.

At the very least, this sect leader's heart was undoubtedly aligned with the interests of the sect.

Of course, Chu Liang kept the existence of the White Pagoda within him a secret, primarily because he still didn't understand why it had fused with him or whether it could ever be separated from his soul. He had once tried to summon the actual tangible structure of the pagoda, but it was impossible.

If he were to reveal this, Venerable Wen Yuan might choose to sacrifice Chu Liang for the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda, for the Mount Shu Sect, and for the sake of upholding righteousness. Where would Chu Liang go to seek justice then?

It wasn't that Venerable Wen Yuan wasn't a good person; rather, those who rose to lead a sect within the Divine Nine were seldom motivated by personal gain. Their actions were guided by higher ideals. If reclaiming the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda required it, he likely wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice not only Chu Liang but even himself.

"Previously, I accidentally came across an exotic beast, the Heaven-Devouring Bug, which is why that demon king captured me," Chu Liang explained. "Fortunately, the Heaven-Devouring Bug is no longer with me, so they couldn't locate it. However, only I know where it is now."

He went on to explain how the demons were searching the Heaven-Devouring Bug to use it as a vessel to hold the life essence of the Demon God. Venerable Wen Yuan listened intently, falling silent as he pondered for a long time.

Venerable Wen Yuan said slowly, "In today's world, chaos is rising. A ninth-realm existence must emerge to restore order and bring peace."

He paused, then his tone changed as he continued to speak. "But that ninth-realm figure must not be a demonic or evil being. Otherwise, the nightmare from three thousand years ago will repeat. And this time, our sect no longer has the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda to save us."

Venerable Wen Yuan then uttered in a chilling tone, "The Heaven-Devouring Bug must be killed."

Chu Liang felt a shiver run down his spine but chose not to argue.

The thought of killing Tuntun filled him with deep reluctance. Yet, as long as it existed, the threat of the Demon God's resurgence loomed over him. If the demons ever succeeded, there would be no path to redemption for him.

After a brief pause, Chu Liang said, "Caiyi also told me something else..."

Chu Liang then revealed the matter of Baize assisting in releasing the Demon God. It was clear that Venerable Wen Yuan hadn't been aware of this. Even with his typically calm and composed demeanor, a flicker of emotion flashed in his eyes.

A long silence followed before Venerable Wen Yuan finally spoke again. "As the guardian celestial beast of Mount Shu for thousands of years, it's unlikely Baize would have acted in a way that harms our sect. I will find a way to verify this matter.

"For now, let's put aside the task of killing the Heaven-Devouring Bug. Just stay on Mount Shu for the time being. With Baize, Daoist Yan, and myself overseeing the situation and the Violet and Azure Twin Swords protecting you, no one will be able to harm you here."

Such a deep sense of reassurance, Chu Liang thought and sighed inwardly.

He nodded and said, "I will stay on the mountain and cultivate peacefully."

"Your cultivation reached the Dao Attainment Realm in a single night; you need time to stabilize your cultivation energy. Staying on Mount Shu for a while will benefit you. Reaching the seventh realm isn't the end of your journey—it's only the beginning. Until now, your cultivation has been under the protection of your elders. From this point on, you will walk the true path of immortality cultivation."

He continued, his voice heavy with emotion. "It's a very cruel path..."

Chu Liang had prepared himself for this. Before reaching the seventh realm, all his trials and hidden realm experiences had been carefully arranged by his sect elders. While there had been some dangers and casualties, it was, overall, like growing up sheltered in a greenhouse.

Upon reaching the Dao Attainment Realm, a disciple's role shifted from being the protected to becoming the protector, shouldering the responsibility of supporting the sect.

Over the years, the number of Mount Shu disciples who reached the Dao Attainment Realm but died outside the sect was far greater than most could imagine. Ordinary disciples were certainly not the ones who had lost legendary items like the six demon-eliminating treasures.

The conversation then came to an end. Chu Liang had just stepped out of the Boundless Palace when the sound of a commotion reached his ears.

...

As soon as Chu Liang stepped out, he was met by the Alchemy Master, who grabbed him with an exasperated expression.

"Chu Liang, just the person I was looking for! Go deal with your esteemed teacher. She's been flying around Mount Shu for over ten laps, insisting she's lost..."

"Huh?"

Chu Liang was taken aback and quickly flew up to the skies to see what was going on.

In the distance, he spotted a massive headless purple serpent floating in midair. As he flew closer, he realized it was Di Nufeng. She was casually carrying the serpent's corpse on her shoulder as she drifted leisurely through the sky.

The giant serpent emanated an overwhelming spiritual energy, and even in death, it radiated a faint divine light. It was clear this was no ordinary creature.

Yet, here was his teacher, casually parading around with the serpent's massive corpse. This baffling behavior left Chu Liang utterly confused.

"Esteemed Teacher, what are you doing?" Chu Liang asked as he approached.

Di Nufeng turned her head, and upon seeing Chu Liang, she said, "Ah, my disciple! How did you know your teacher killed an eighth-realm greater demon king to save you?"

"..." Chu Liang was momentarily speechless.

No wonder she had been circling for so long without anyone daring to intervene. Who would dare say anything after hearing that?

This must be the corpse of the legendary Demon King of the Great Marshlands. It seems he was seriously injured while trying to rescue me from Daoist Cangsheng. The fatal blow must have come from Daoist Cangsheng. Otherwise, no matter how powerful my teacher is, it would have been nearly impossible for her, a seventh-realm cultivator, to challenge an eighth-realm expert.

So, Daoist Cangsheng really went all out...

At the thought of this, Chu Liang couldn't help but feel a chill run down his spine.

Looking at his esteemed teacher, he was filled with emotion. "Teacher, even the heavens would weep for the risk you took to ensure your disciple's safety. But after flying around for so many rounds, shouldn't we head home now?"

"Yes, I should have gone home a long time ago." Di Nufeng smacked herself on the forehead. "I just couldn't remember the way back to Silver Sword Peak. You know I have no sense of direction..."

"Let me guide you back. It's this way," Chu Liang said with a smile, pointing in the direction.

"Oh, so it's this way," Di Nufeng replied, then she flew off in the completely opposite direction.

Chu Liang reminded softly, "Esteemed Teacher, that's the way to Jade Sword Peak."

Di Nufeng replied with a hearty laugh, "I'm just going to find Wang Xuanling to ask for directions."

Chu Liang watched his teacher recede into the distance and couldn't help but feel a sense of helplessness. If Wang Xuanling refused to come out, she might end up wandering around until Changfeng's corpse dried into snake jerky.

At that thought, Chu Liang suddenly became curious.

The Evil Heart Curse could transform someone into a devil, unleashing their repressed evil. Chu Liang couldn't help but wonder what would happen if he used this mantra on his esteemed teacher.

Unable to suppress the sudden surge of curiosity, Chu Liang raised his hand and pointed.

Whoosh!

The Evil Heart Curse was unleashed upon Di Nufeng, and she froze momentarily. She turned her head with a puzzled expression. "What was that?"

She looked around twice, but noticed nothing amiss. Then, she turned back and continued flying forward while muttering, "Old Man, come out and show me the way!"

Huh? Chu Liang followed behind his teacher for a while and noticed no change.

How strange. Even people as mild-mannered as Lackey A and Lackey B have hidden malice in their hearts, so how can my teacher have none? Or is it because her cultivation is stronger than mine, making the curse ineffective? Wait...

While Chu Liang was deep in thought, he suddenly realized something. Perhaps the curse had worked, but the effects were subtle... After all, the Evil Heart Curse turned people into devils, but some people... were devils to begin with.

Before he could finish this string of thoughts, a loud boom resounded.

Di Nufeng, still carrying the serpent's massive corpse, landed heavily on Jade Sword Peak, shouting at the top of her lungs, "Old Man! If you don't come out and show me the way, you'll have to come out to put out a fire! What? Where's the fire? Of course, it's at your place! Hee-hee-hee!"