

A Man Like None Other

Novel

Chapter 6466

The Celestial Venerable leaned back on his throne, eyes closed, his fingers still lightly tapping the armrest.

One tap, then another, monotonous and persistent, like some ancient timer silently counting down.

The image of that purple divine soul, that golden tome, that indestructible golden light flashed repeatedly in his mind.

The opportunity was right before him, yet he had watched it slip away.

He was unwilling to accept it.

He stood up and paced back and forth in the hall, his golden robe trailing on the ground with a rustling sound.

He stopped before the star map in the hall, his gaze falling on the map of the Northern Region, moving from the direction of the Guiyuan Sect to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, and then back to the Celestial Venerable Palace.

His brow furrowed, his mind racing.

Where was that divine soul?

The Guiyuan Sect?

The City of Loose Cultivators?

Or had it already escaped to the desolate wilderness deep within the Northern Region?

The Celestial Venerable took a deep breath, suppressing his agitation.

He opened his eyes and took out a golden token from his robes.

The token, only the size of a palm, was forged entirely from ancient gold crystal, with an ancient character “悬” (xuan, meaning “suspended”) engraved on its surface, emitting a faint golden light.

This was a bounty notice from the Heavenly Pole Palace, one of its most treasured heirlooms passed down for tens of thousands of years. Once issued, it would reach all the independent cultivators and small and medium-sized forces in the entire Northern Region.

He lightly tapped the token with his fingertip, and a golden light screen emerged from it, hovering before him like ripples on water.

Dense ancient runes appeared on the light screen—the Heavenly Pole Palace’s special array for bounty notices, capable of transmitting information to every corner of the Northern Region.

He concentrated for a moment, then inscribed a line of text on the light screen, each character imbued with his divine sense and spiritual power to ensure the message’s authenticity and authority.

“Bounty Notice: Anyone who provides clues leading to the discovery of a cluster of purple divine souls will be rewarded with three Golden Immortal Pills and one million spirit stones.

Anyone who brings the purple divine souls back to the Heavenly Pole Palace will be rewarded with a Golden Immortal cultivation technique, ten million spirit stones, and the position of Guest Elder of the Heavenly Pole Palace.”

Three Golden Immortal Pills.

A Golden Immortal cultivation technique, a single manual.

Millions of spirit stones.

The position of Guest Elder.

Each of these items alone would be enough to drive the rogue cultivators of the Northern Region mad.

Those desperate scoundrels who would risk their lives for a few spirit stones, those impoverished rogue cultivators yearning for breakthroughs, those small sects clinging to powerful forces—no one could resist such temptation.

The Celestial Venerable looked at the words on the light screen, a cold smile slowly curving his lips.

This was an open scheme; he didn't need to seek it out personally.

He only needed to throw out enough bait, and countless people would naturally be willing to risk their lives for him.

He waved his hand, and the golden light screen transformed into countless points of light, flying out like fireflies, spreading in all directions.

The points of light pierced through the dome of the main hall, through the restrictions of the Celestial Venerable's Palace, through the sky of the Northern Region, flying to every corner.

The bounty had been issued.

Now, all he had to do was wait.

Wait for those greedy rogue cultivators, wait for those small forces wanting to curry favor with the Celestial Venerable's Palace, wait for those desperate scoundrels seeking overnight riches to bring David's soul before him.

The Venerable Celestial sat down again, leaning back on his throne and closing his eyes.

His fingers began to tap lightly on the armrest again, once, then again.

Only this monotonous tapping echoed in the hall, like some ancient timer calculating something.

Outside the window, three blazing suns hung high, their golden, silver, and crimson rays weaving and scattering, dyeing the entire land a dark, golden hue.

The bounty had been issued for less than half a day, yet the entire Northern Region was in an uproar.

In the taverns of Tianque City, rogue cultivators sat huddled together, whispering amongst themselves.

The tavern walls were made of rough gray stone, with a few spirit lamps hanging from them, emitting a dim light.

The air was thick with the smell of cheap spirit wine and roasted meat; the clinking of cups and plates, shouts, and laughter mingled together in a noisy, chaotic cacophony.

But at this moment, everyone's conversation revolved around the same thing—the bounty from the Tianji Palace.

Some marveled at the Tianji Palace's extravagance, some were envious of the bounty rewards, and some were itching to search for that purple divine soul.

The tavern owner, an old man at the ninth rank of True Immortal Realm, leaned against the counter, listening to the discussions, a mocking smile playing on his lips.

He didn't speak, only fiddled with the beads on the abacus, making a clattering sound.

"Three Golden Immortal Pills! One Golden Immortal Cultivation Technique! Ten million spirit stones! A guest elder position! Has the Heavenly Palace gone mad?"

A rogue cultivator with a scar on his face slammed his fist on the table, his eyes wide like copper bells, his voice filled with shock and greed. "All these things combined are enough to make an ordinary rogue cultivator leap into the hands of a powerful figure in the Northern Region! If it were me, I'd be laughing in my sleep!"

"Tch, you're dreaming? Do you even have the life to take them?"

An old man sitting in the corner sneered. He wore a tattered Taoist robe and held a rusty longsword in his arms.

His voice was hoarse, carrying a hint of mockery and helplessness.

"That purple soul, able to escape from four Golden Immortal elders, can it be anything ordinary?"

The Heavenly Palace's bounty is so high, indicating the soul's value far exceeds these rewards. Do you think the Heavenly Palace is a sucker?

"They're using these rogue cultivators as pawns, making them search for that soul. If they find it, the credit goes to the Heavenly Palace; if they don't, it's not their people who die."

"So what?" the scarred rogue cultivator retorted, unconvinced. "Fortune favors the bold! If we find that soul and hand it over to the Heavenly Palace, we won't have to worry for the rest of our lives."

"You don't even know what that soul looks like, where are you going to find it?" The old man scoffed, shook his head, and said no more.

In front of the teleportation array in Heavenly Palace City, a black-clad cultivator hurriedly handed over spirit stones and stepped into the array.

He was a spy for a small force in the Northern Region, specializing in collecting intelligence and then reselling it to those who needed it.

Less than an hour after the bounty was issued, he had already copied the message hundreds of times and sent it to various regions through secret channels.

He was gambling, gambling that this intelligence would bring a hefty reward.

In the underground black market of Black Wind City, several sinister-looking cultivators huddled together, whispering amongst themselves.

They were an organization specializing in assassinations and captures; they were willing to do anything for the right price.

The reward on the bounty poster tempted them, but what they cared about even more was the "Guest Elder position."

A Guest Elder of the Heavenly Pole Palace meant access to the palace's resources and the ability to act with impunity in the Northern Region.

This power was far more alluring than any spirit stones or cultivation techniques.

However, they were equally cautious.

They didn't know where the purple divine soul was, what it looked like, or what its abilities were.

Anything that could escape from the clutches of the four Golden Immortal Elders of the Heavenly Pole Palace was no ordinary thing.

They needed more intelligence, more information, before deciding whether to take action.

Discussions swirled, but few dared to actually go after it.

It wasn't that they weren't envious, but rather that they dared not.

If the four Golden Immortal Elders of the Heavenly Pole Palace had lost track of it, wouldn't it be suicide for these rogue cultivators to pursue it?

Nevertheless, news of the bounty poster spread throughout the Northern Region at an astonishing speed.

The news spread to major cities, major sects, and even to the Guiyuan Sect.

The day after the bounty was issued, the Tianji Palace received a secret report.

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The secret report was sent anonymously via a jade slip, leaving no trace of identity, not even the divine sense imprint, clearly to prevent the Heavenly Extreme Palace from tracing the sender's identity.

However, the content made the Heavenly Extreme Venerable sit up straight, his previously languid posture instantly tense.

"That purple divine soul is in the Guiyuan Sect."

Only one sentence.

No explanation, no evidence, no signature.

But the Heavenly Extreme Venerable's intuition told him the message was true.

He picked up the jade slip and read it repeatedly three times, his divine sense penetrating it to carefully examine it, trying to find a clue.

But the sender was well hidden, leaving no trace.

He stood up and paced back and forth in the hall, his brow furrowed, his golden robe trailing behind him in arcs.

The Guiyuan Sect, a human power, its sect leader Guiyuanzi, a third-rank Golden Immortal.

Not particularly strong, but not weak either.

If David's divine soul was truly in the Guiyuan Sect, why hadn't Guiyuanzi handed him over?

Was he unaware of the bounty?

Impossible.

The entire Northern Region knew about it the day after the bounty was issued.

As a prominent sect in the Northern Region, Guiyuan Sect couldn't possibly be unaware of this.

There's only one explanation—Guiyuanzi deliberately concealed it, intending to keep the treasure for himself.

A cold glint flashed in Tianji Venerable's eyes, his killing intent radiating a palpable intensity that sent shivers down the spines of the guards on either side of the hall.

Guiyuanzi, a sect leader of a human race, dared to challenge him? He was courting death.

What was he?

A mere human, worthy of coveting such a heaven-defying treasure?

In the eyes of the gods, other races were trash, inferior beings.

"Guards!" His voice was cold, so cold that no one dared disobey.

The guard outside the main hall hurried in, knelt on the ground, his body trembling slightly, his forehead pressed to the ground, not daring to raise his head: "Hall Master."

"Pass down the order. Elder Zhao, Elder Qian, Elder Sun, Elder Li, accompany me to Guiyuan Sect. I want to personally meet Guiyuanzi."

"Yes!"

The guard left the main hall and hurried to relay the order.

Venerable Tianji stood in the center of the main hall, his hands behind his back, his gaze looking into the distance through the doors and windows of the main hall.

A cold smile slowly curled at the corner of his mouth.

Guiyuanzi, I'll see if you dare to say to my face that his soul is not in Guiyuan Sect.

Venerable Tianji acted quickly.

In less than half an hour, the four Golden Immortal elders had already gathered in the square of Tianji Hall.

The square was paved with white jade, smooth and flat, reflecting a faint light under the sun.

Dozens of enormous stone pillars stand around the plaza, their surfaces covered with the supreme runes of the divine race, which shimmer with golden light in the sunlight. Elder Zhao stood at the forefront, a second-grade Golden Immortal with an aura as powerful as a mountain.

He was tall and imposing, with a rugged, ancient face and long, white hair tied back. He held a golden longsword, its blade gleaming with a sharp, piercing light.

He cultivated metal-based techniques, specializing in direct attacks, and was the strongest person in the Heavenly Palace besides the Palace Master.

But now, his face lacked its usual composure, replaced by a solemn expression.

Elder Qian stood behind him, a peak first-grade Golden Immortal, with a lean face and fair skin, holding a whisk.

He cultivated water-based techniques, specializing in support and trapping enemies; his personality was gloomy, and he rarely spoke.

Elder Sun stood beside Elder Qian, also a peak first-grade Golden Immortal, with a burly, broad-shouldered build, wielding a massive warhammer.

He cultivated earth-based techniques, specializing in defense and suppression; his temper was volatile, and he was prone to anger.

But at this moment, the anger on his face was suppressed, replaced by a hint of unease.

Elder Li stood at the very back, a first-grade Golden Immortal, the lowest in cultivation among the four.

He cultivated fire-based techniques, specializing in attack and burst damage, and was flamboyant and fond of showing off.

But now, he remained silent, head bowed, lost in thought.

The combined aura of the four was like a mountain, pressing down on the air in the plaza, making it seem solid.

Venerable Tianji emerged from the main hall, clad in a golden robe, a long sword at his waist, golden holy light flowing around him, exuding majesty.

His gait was steady, each step landing firmly on the white jade floor.

He walked to the center of the plaza, his gaze sweeping over the four elders, his eyes devoid of any warmth.

"The Guiyuan Sect is not large, and Guiyuanzi is a third-grade Golden Immortal. But I dislike trouble. Once you arrive at the Guiyuan Sect, don't waste words, just ask for the person directly. If Guiyuanzi knows what's good for him, hand over his soul, and I will not pursue the matter. If he doesn't—"

He didn't finish his sentence, but his meaning was clear.

No need to say it aloud, everyone understands.

Elder Zhao stepped forward and whispered, "Palace Master, although Guiyuan Sect is not large, it is still a human sect. Won't our direct demand for people provoke the displeasure of other human forces? What if the Qingyun Sword Sect and the Wanfa Sect intervene?"

The Heavenly Extreme Venerable sneered, his eyes filled with contempt and disdain: "Qingyun Sword Sect? Wanfa Sect? Do they dare?"

He paused, his gaze sweeping across the distant horizon, his voice carrying an undeniable domineering air: "Even if they had a hundred lives, they wouldn't

dare oppose the Heavenly Extreme Palace. Besides, we're not going to wipe out an entire sect, just to demand one person.

If Guiyuanzi can't hand over the person, that's his problem. If he can, everyone will be at peace. I want to see who dares to break ties with the Heavenly Extreme Palace for the sake of a mere Guiyuan Sect."

Elder Zhao said no more and stepped aside.

The Palace Master was right. Although Guiyuan Sect was a human force, it had never been the core of the human race.

The Qingyun Sword Sect and the Wanfa Sect are the backbone of the human race in the Seventeenth Heaven.

What is the Guiyuan Sect?

It's just a small branch of the human race, dispensable.

Those major human powers won't offend the Tianji Palace for the sake of the Guiyuan Sect.

The Tianji Venerable leaped up, transforming into a golden streak of light, flying towards the Guiyuan Sect.

His speed was extreme, leaving only a faint golden afterimage before instantly disappearing into the horizon.

The four elders exchanged a glance and quickly followed, transforming into four golden beams of light.

The five golden beams pierced the sky at extreme speed, instantly traversing thousands of miles of mountains and rivers.

In the sky, three blazing suns hung high, their golden, silver, and crimson rays intertwining and scattering, making the five golden beams exceptionally conspicuous.

Chapter 6468

Guiyuan Sect, Front Hall.

The main hall is built of bluestone, simple and ancient, lacking the splendor of the Tianji Hall or the mysterious depths of the Demon Emperor's Palace.

The pillars in the hall are engraved with the achievements of the Guiyuan Sect's past patriarchs, each relief telling the story of the sect's history.

Inside the hall stands a tall statue of the patriarch, carved from the finest warm jade, lifelike, with a gentle smile in his eyes.

That is the patriarch of Taoism, the ancient master who comprehended the Great Luo Golden Scripture and founded the Taoist lineage, long since ascended to a higher realm.

Li Qingyun sat cross-legged on a futon, facing the patriarch's statue, yet unable to calm his mind.

His brows were furrowed, his eyelids twitched slightly, and a heavy weight pressed on his heart, making it hard to breathe.

David's trial was in the next two days, and Guiyuanzi was not in the sect.

His mind was preoccupied, making it impossible for him to cultivate in peace.

He opened his eyes, sighed, stood up, walked to the hall entrance, and gazed into the distance.

The sky was blue, the clouds were thin, and the wind was gentle.

Everything was calm, but his heart was far from calm.

Just then, a disciple stumbled in, his face pale, his voice trembling, his lips quivering, barely able to speak: "Elder Li... Elder Li! It's terrible! The Hall Master of the Heavenly Pole Palace, Venerable Heavenly Pole, is flying towards our Guiyuan Sect with four Golden Immortal Elders! They're... they're almost at the mountain gate!"

Li Qingyun's expression instantly changed. He abruptly stood up, grabbed the long sword at his waist, and strode out of the front hall.

His fingers trembled slightly, not from fear, but from anger.

The Heavenly Pole Palace was going too far; a bounty wasn't enough, they had to come and search their own sect?

Did they really think the Guiyuan Sect was a pushover, to be bullied at will?

"Pass down the order: activate the mountain-protecting formation! All disciples, be on high alert!"

"Yes!"

The order echoed throughout the mountain gate, and disciples rushed out from all directions, weapons in hand, their expressions tense.

The mountain-protecting formation lit up, a pale golden light shield enveloping the entire mountain gate. Dense runes flowed across the shield, flickering and radiating powerful defensive energy.

But Li Qingyun knew that this formation couldn't stop the Heavenly Venerable.

A Golden Immortal of the third rank was not someone a formation could withstand.

But this formation represented the Guiyuan Sect's attitude—not just anyone could trespass.

Li Qingyun stood before the mountain gate, the veins bulging on his hand gripping his sword hilt.

His robes fluttered in the mountain wind, his gaze fixed on the distance, his eyes filled with vigilance.

The Heavenly Venerable arrived quickly.

Five golden streaks of light flew from the horizon, like five shooting stars, trailing long flames, landing before the Guiyuan Sect's mountain gate.

The golden light dissipated, revealing five figures before Li Qingyun.

Leading them was the Heavenly Venerable, clad in a long golden robe, his aura powerful and imposing.

His gaze fell upon Li Qingyun as if he were an insignificant ant. Behind him stood four Golden Immortal elders, their auras robust and their expressions cold, like four iron towers.

Li Qingyun took a deep breath, suppressing his fear, and clasped his hands in a respectful greeting. His hands trembled, but his voice remained steady.

"Junior Li Qingyun, Elder of the Guiyuan Sect, greets the Heavenly Venerable. The Sect Master is not in the sect; he has gone out on business. May I ask what brings you here, Venerable?"

"Going out on business?" The Heavenly Venerable sneered, a mocking smile playing on his lips. "What business?"

Li Qingyun hesitated, his mind racing.

He knew that if he didn't tell the truth, the Heavenly Venerable would search the sect.

It was better to confess than let him find out; at least it would make the Guiyuan Sect appear open and honest.

Moreover, the sect leader was indeed absent; they had indeed gone to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge—that was a fact, and even the Heavenly Venerable couldn't find any fault with it.

"The sect leader went to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge to request an audience with the Demon Emperor Qingqiu. As for the specifics, this junior does not know."

"The Ten Thousand Demon Ridge?"

The Heavenly Venerable's eyes narrowed slightly, a cold glint flashing within them. His voice suddenly deepened. "What did Guiyuanzi go to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge for? What did he want to see the Demon Emperor Qingqiu for?"

Li Qingyun shook his head: "This junior does not know."

The Heavenly Venerable stared at him, silent for a moment.

His gaze, sharp as a hawk's, swept over Li Qingyun.

Li Qingyun felt his very soul tremble, as if every thought of his was being seen through.

But he gritted his teeth, not allowing himself to reveal a flaw.

Then the Heavenly Venerable smiled. That smile was cold, so cold that it lowered the surrounding temperature, like the biting wind of December, piercing to the bone. "You don't know? Fine, I'll ask you then. A few days ago, didn't Guiyuanzi bring back a wisp of purple divine soul?"

Li Qingyun's heart sank, as if gripped tightly by an invisible hand.

His expression changed slightly, but he quickly regained his composure.

He remained silent for a moment, his mind racing, weighing the pros and cons.

He knew he couldn't hide it any longer.

Since Venerable Tianji could find Guiyuan Sect, it meant he already had concrete clues.

If he denied it, Venerable Tianji would definitely search the sect.

Finding the Soul-Nourishing Jade Bottle in the secret chamber would only make things more troublesome.

He gritted his teeth and slowly spoke, his voice low and respectful: "Venerable One, it is true. But that soul was discovered by our sect leader during an inspection. At the time, the soul was on the verge of death, and the sect leader, out of kindness, brought it back to the Yuan Sect for recuperation.

We did not know that the soul was the target of the Heavenly Extreme Palace's pursuit. If we had known, we certainly would not have..."

"Enough nonsense." Venerable Heavenly Extreme interrupted him, his tone full of impatience, "Where is that soul now?"

Li Qingyun lowered his head, not daring to look into Venerable Heavenly Extreme's eyes, his voice carrying a hint of helpless sigh: "That soul was taken to the Myriad Demon Ridge by the sect leader."

Venerable Heavenly Extreme frowned, a trace of doubt and apprehension flashing in his eyes: "Took it to the Myriad Demon Ridge? What for?"

"The sect leader said that the soul needs the Eternal Soul Wood to reshape its physical body, so he took it to the Myriad Demon Ridge to obtain the Eternal Soul Wood." Venerable

Heavenly Extreme was silent for a moment, a trace of apprehension flashing in his eyes.

Myriad Demon Ridge, the territory of the Demon Emperor Qingqiu.

Although Qingqiu's cultivation was also at the third rank of Golden Immortal, the difference between him and Guiyuanzi was not significant, unlike Guiyuanzi.

Moreover, the demon race had been operating in the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge for tens of thousands of years, with numerous restrictions and dense formations, making it nearly impossible for outsiders to enter.

Furthermore, Qingqiu was always xenophobic and disliked associating with the gods.

If he rashly led people to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge to demand the soul, it would likely provoke a backlash from the demon race.

In that case, not only would he fail to obtain the divine soul, but he would also offend the demon race and get himself into a lot of trouble.

But he was unwilling to not go.

That supreme treasure was right before his eyes; he couldn't just watch it slip away.

Guiyuanzi was taking the divine soul to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge to seek the Eternal Soul Wood; if Guiyuanzi succeeded, that supreme treasure would fall into Guiyuanzi's hands.

He couldn't allow such a thing to happen.

"Let's go, to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge."

The Heavenly Extreme Venerable turned around, leaped into the air, and transformed into a golden streak of light, flying towards the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

His speed was extreme, leaving only a faint golden afterimage.

He had to retrieve David's soul before Guiyuanzi obtained the Eternal Soul Wood.

The four elders exchanged glances and quickly followed.

Five golden lights pierced the sky and disappeared into the distance.

Before the mountain gate, only Li Qingyun and a group of Guiyuan Sect disciples remained, standing alone.

Li Qingyun stood before the mountain gate, watching the five golden lights gradually disappear, his heart filled with worry.

His brows were furrowed, and his fingers gripped the hilt of his sword tightly.

The young master was preparing for the trial at Wan Yao Ridge. If the Heavenly Extreme Venerable led his men to cause trouble at this time, Wan Yao Ridge would definitely be thrown into chaos, and the young master might die there.

He had to inform the sect master as soon as possible.

He turned and strode into the sect, took out a communication jade slip, and infused it with his divine sense, leaving a line of words on the jade slip.

His fingers trembled slightly, but the handwriting was clear and powerful.

"Sect Master, the Heavenly Extreme Venerable has led his men to Wan Yao Ridge, targeting the young master. Please prepare immediately."

He held the jade slip in his palm, activated his spiritual power, and the jade slip transformed into a stream of light, flying into the distance.

A flash of light disappeared into the sky.

Li Qingyun stood at the entrance of the main hall, gazing in the direction where the light had vanished, remaining silent for a long time.

The disciples behind him were still discussing amongst themselves; some were fearful, some angry, and some bewildered.

Li Qingyun didn't speak. He turned and entered the main hall, knelt before the statue of the patriarch, closed his eyes, and silently prayed.

"Patriarch above, I beg you to protect the young master's safety, and to protect the Guiyuan Sect's safety."

Outside the hall, the wind stopped, and the clouds dispersed.

Three blazing suns hung high, their golden, silver, and crimson rays bathing the earth in a dark, golden light.

Chapter 6469

Before the mist had fully dissipated over the northern region of the Seventeenth Heaven, Qingqiu personally led David and Guiyuanzi, braving the morning dew, straight to the entrance of the Primordial Soul Forest, the deepest part of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

Along the way, countless demons lay dormant, spirit birds folded their wings, and the air was filled with an ancient and eerie aura of divine souls. Even

Guiyuanzi, a Golden Immortal of the third rank, couldn't help but appear solemn, daring not to slacken his guard in the slightest.

The entrance to the Primordial Soul Forest was hidden in a canyon deep within the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. It wasn't an ordinary passage, but a massive stone gate that had stood for millennia.

The stone gate was about ten zhang high and five zhang wide, entirely constructed of unknown, dark, strange stones. Its surface was smooth as a mirror, yet it was covered with densely packed ancient soul race runes.

The runes, winding and twisting like rushing rivers or coiled serpents, shimmered with an eerie blue light in the dim canyon, exuding an ancient majesty and eeriness, silently warning intruders of the perilous nature of this place.

Beneath the stone gate, two demon cultivators clad in black beast armor stood silently, their figures as upright as pine trees, their expressions solemn and cold, their auras refined, both possessing the cultivation of a ninth-grade True Immortal.

They gripped a jet-black spear tightly in their hands, its tip gleaming with a chilling light, guarding the stone entrance without even blinking, like two emotionless stone statues.

Qingqiu didn't stop, walking to the stone gate. His gaze swept over the two guards, his tone calm yet carrying an undeniable authority, uttering only one word: "Open."

As soon as he finished speaking, the two demon guards didn't hesitate, simultaneously plunging their spears into the pre-designated grooves in the ground. Their spiritual energy surged wildly, continuously pouring into the grooves.

In an instant, the ancient runes on the stone gate seemed to activate, a sudden burst of blue light. At first, it was just a faint point of light, then it grew

brighter and brighter, becoming increasingly dazzling. The blue light intertwined and formed a massive net of light, enveloping the entire stone gate.

With a deep, rumbling sound, the stone gate slowly opened inwards. From the cracks, an extremely dense darkness and aura of divine souls rushed out. Inside, there was no ground, no sky, only boundless blackness, like an abyss that devoured everything.

In the darkness, crisscrossing paths could be vaguely seen, like a maze, winding and twisting into unknown depths, their end unseen, their hidden dangers unknown.

Qingqiu's voice came from behind, carrying a hint of warning and scrutiny: "The first trial, the Soul Forest Maze. This maze is no ordinary maze; it is filled with ancient Soul Clan restrictions and illusion arrays.

The restrictions will injure you upon contact, and the illusion arrays will bewitch your soul, distort your senses, and cause you to lose your way, ultimately trapping you within the maze, your soul slowly eroded away.

Only by guarding your true self, breaking through the illusion arrays, and finding the true exit can you enter the second trial. Remember, a disordered mind leads to a disordered soul, and a disordered soul leads to certain death."

David's purple soul trembled slightly. He didn't utter any unnecessary words; he knew that any words were meaningless at this moment. Only by passing the trial could he obtain the Eternal Soul Wood, rebuild his physical body, and avenge himself.

After a moment's hesitation, he transformed into a condensed purple streak of light and plunged into the stone gate without hesitation, instantly swallowed by the endless darkness.

The surroundings fell into deathly silence; there was no wind, no light, and he couldn't even sense his own existence. Only the boundless darkness

enveloped him like a tidal wave, pressing down on his soul, making it feel slightly suffocated.

David's soul hovered in the void, the warm golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture automatically illuminating a three-foot radius around him, becoming the only light in this darkness, and his only support.

He steadied himself, urged his soul, and tried to fly forward, but after only a few dozen feet, the path ahead suddenly split into three. All three paths were identical, leading to endless darkness, without any markings or distinctions, as if mocking his ignorance and insignificance.

David didn't make a hasty decision. He focused his mind, activating the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, attempting to probe the aura of the three paths. The golden light was immediately blocked by an invisible force in the darkness, making it impossible to detect anything.

Left with no other option, he relied on his intuition and chose the leftmost path, transforming into a purple ray and flying swiftly away.

After flying less than a hundred feet, a pitch-black stone wall suddenly appeared ahead. The wall was tall and thick, constructed entirely of mysterious black stone, and covered with countless ancient soul runes. The runes flickered with a faint blue light, emanating an eerie aura of restriction.

David's heart sank; he knew he had encountered the first restriction in the maze.

Without pausing, he activated the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, enveloping his divine soul, and tried to pass through the stone wall.

But the instant the golden light touched the wall, the soul runes on the stone wall suddenly lit up.

A violent black spiritual energy shockwave erupted instantly, slamming into the golden light with a muffled "bang." The golden light trembled violently,

and David's divine soul was violently thrown back. A sharp pain shot through the depths of his soul, nearly causing it to dissipate.

"It's not a physical wall, it's a soul-binding restriction, specifically designed to target soul attacks,"

David thought to himself. He dared not attempt anything more rashly and could only slowly retreat back to the fork in the road, his expression grave.

Since the first path was blocked, he had no choice but to take the middle one. This time, he was exceptionally cautious, slowing his pace and constantly watching his surroundings. The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture remained at its maximum, a vigilant defense.

This time, he flew for much longer than before, covering hundreds of feet. The surrounding darkness grew increasingly dense, like solidified ink. The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture was constantly compressed, gradually shrinking from three feet to one foot,

and its radiance dimmed considerably. Even more terrifying, a strange force began to erode his soul. His consciousness gradually blurred, and he seemed to hear countless whispers.

There were familiar voices and unfamiliar roars; these voices entwined around his soul, as if countless invisible hands were tearing at his consciousness, pulling at his soul, trying to drag him into endless depravity.

"It's an illusion array!"

David's heart skipped a beat, and he instantly regained his senses.

He knew that once trapped in an illusion array, his mind would be lost, and his soul would be completely swallowed by the maze.

He gritted his teeth, enduring the stinging pain in his soul, and with all his might, activated the Great Luo Golden Scripture, frantically channeling the remaining spiritual power within his body into the golden light.

“Buzz—”

A deep Daoist sound rang out, and the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture suddenly surged, like a blazing sun, instantly dispelling the surrounding darkness for a moment.

In that fleeting moment of light, David vaguely saw the outline of the exit—just a hundred feet ahead, a faint blue light flickered, the marker for the maze’s exit.

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Just as he was about to sprint forward, the illusion array suddenly intensified, the surrounding scenery instantly distorted, the outline of the exit disappeared, and in its place appeared countless familiar figures.

Lin Yuan, Zhao Tieshan, Old Man Xu, and the dead disciples of Freedom Valley, covered in blood, stretched out their hands towards him, wailing softly, expressing endless pain and resentment.

“David, save us...” “Revenge...we must take revenge...”

David’s soul trembled violently, grief and guilt surged into his heart, his consciousness blurred again, and his steps involuntarily stopped.

At this critical moment, deep within his sea of consciousness, Bei Mingyuan’s voice suddenly rang out, cold and clear: “David, wake up! This is an illusion array! It’s fake! You can’t be deceived, have you forgotten your mission? Have you forgotten that you must rebuild your physical body and take revenge?”

Bei Mingyuan’s voice was like a thunderclap, instantly awakening David.

He snapped back to his senses, a resolute glint in his eyes. Suppressing all his emotions, he ignored the illusions, channeling all his spiritual power into a streak of purple light, and charged towards the exit he remembered.

Illusions constantly interfered, countless eerie shadows lunging at him, but all were deflected by the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

A distance of several hundred feet now felt like an insurmountable chasm; with each inch he flew, the piercing pain in his soul intensified, and the interference of the illusion array grew stronger.

Just as he was about to give up, a blue light shone again ahead; the exit was near.

David gritted his teeth, mustered his last ounce of strength, broke free of the illusion array's constraints, and plunged into the exit.

Instantly, the darkness vanished, light flooded in, and he finally escaped the Soul Forest Maze.

Emerging from the maze, a vast, open square space unfolded before him, a stark contrast to the endless darkness within. The second level was a wide, square space.

The space was small, only a hundred feet in circumference, surrounded by towering, steep black rock walls carved with ancient soul runes that emitted a faint blue light, casting an eerie glow over the entire space.

In the very center of the space, a dense swarm of soul beasts gathered, their numbers immense—at least a hundred at a glance—a dark, overwhelming mass, exuding a thick, bloodthirsty aura that sent chills down one's spine.

These soul beasts were not physical entities, but rather formed from pure black mist, their shapes varied. Some resembled agile black wolves, baring their fangs and fierce eyes;

others were like majestic tigers, with thick limbs and an imposing presence;

some were like long, slithering snakes, their bodies nimble, their tongues flicking;

still others were like soaring eagles, their wingspans exceeding ten feet, their talons sharp and pointed.

Their eyes were all blood-red, like burning flames, flashing with a bloodthirsty light in the dim space, fixed intently on David at the entrance of the space.

A silent roar escaped its throat, as if it might pounce at any moment and tear his soul to shreds.

David's soul hovered at the entrance, tightly enveloped by the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, his expression extremely solemn.

He quickly probed the cultivation levels of these soul beasts, his heart sinking. Each soul beast's cultivation level was between the fifth and seventh rank of the True Immortal Realm, with more than a dozen reaching the peak of the ninth rank, only one step away from the Golden Immortal Realm.

Hundreds of True Immortal Realm soul beasts—if he had a physical body, he could easily defeat them with his own combat power. However, he now only had a wisp of weakened divine soul left, and the power he could use was extremely limited. Although the Great Luo Golden Scripture could protect his divine soul and withstand divine soul attacks, it could not initiate attacks and could only passively defend.

"I can't fight head-on, I can only outsmart them."

David quickly calculated in his mind, his eyes fixed on the group of soul beasts, trying to find their weaknesses.

Soul beasts were formed from divine souls, and their attack methods were all pure divine soul attacks. The Great Luo Golden Scripture happened to be able

to counter all divine soul attacks, which meant that these soul beasts could not hurt him at all.

But conversely, he had no means of attack and could not kill these soul beasts. Once he was entangled by them, his divine soul would continue to be consumed, and the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture would eventually dim and dissipate. At that time, he would still be devoured by the soul beasts.

After a moment of silence, David made a bold and risky decision.

He would not entangle with the soul beasts and would fly straight towards the other end of the space. As long as he could break out of this space, he would pass the second trial.

He knew that this was the only way out, and also the most dangerous way. Once he was entangled by the soul beasts, it would be difficult to escape.

Having made up his mind, David no longer hesitated. He activated the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, transforming it into a purple streak of light as he charged towards

the horde of soul beasts. He didn't take a detour, but instead passed directly through the center of the horde, attempting to escape the space as quickly as possible.

Seeing the purple light approaching, the soul beasts were instantly enraged, letting out silent roars in unison. They surged forward like a tidal wave, their dense black shadows covering the entire sky.

Their claws, fangs, and tails all attacked David's soul, each attack carrying a violent soul-shaking force, attempting to tear apart the golden light protection of the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

A series of impacts rang out. The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture trembled violently, rippling outwards, yet it steadily blocked all attacks.

Those soul beasts at the forefront were bounced back the moment their claws touched the golden light. Some were severely injured by the recoil, and much of the black mist dissipated.

Several weaker soul beasts were even shattered by the recoil, turning into a cloud of black mist that dissipated into the space.

Yet these soul beasts seemed to feel no pain, no fear; they charged relentlessly, wave after wave, their attacks like a never-ending tide.

Although the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture was sturdy, it gradually dimmed under the continuous attacks of hundreds of True Immortal Realm soul beasts. David's soul, weakened by the constant drain, grew increasingly painful.

Even more terrifying, the higher-level True Immortal Realm ninth-grade soul beasts seemed to have sensed the weakness of the golden light. They ceased their blind attacks and instead gathered together, condensing a massive black soul shockwave that slammed into David.

That shockwave was incredibly powerful, stronger than the combined attacks of a dozen or so soul beasts, and it struck the golden light.

The golden light instantly caved in, nearly shattering. David's soul was violently shaken, and he spat out a mouthful of blood from his soul. The purple light dimmed slightly.

"This can't go on. I must speed things up!"

David thought to himself, gritting his teeth and using all his strength to activate the remaining spiritual power within his body, injecting it into the

Great Luo Golden Scripture. The golden light surged again, temporarily blocking the soul beast's attack.