the mans Decree: Kai Ping / Chen Ping

Chapter 5981 - 5990

“Mr. Chen, the powerful being has left!”

A voice startled Kai.

He looked over and saw the Lord of Reincarnation still kneeling on the ground.

Kai quickly drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword, glaring menacingly at the Lord of Reincarnation.

“Lord of Reincarnation, what do you want?”

Kai asked.

“Mr. Chen, I just remembered, my legs are numb from kneeling,” the Lord of Reincarnation said.

“Then…then get up!”

Kai took a few steps back.

“Thank you, Mr. Chen.” The Lord of Reincarnation slowly rose. “Mr. Chen, my name is Ming Li, I am not the Lord of Reincarnation, but merely someone who stole the Gate of Reincarnation from my clan.”

“I have offended you greatly, Mr. Chen, please forgive me.”

With that, Ming Li bowed ninety degrees to Kai.

Seeing that Ming Li’s attitude was good, and that he wouldn’t attack him, Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword.

“I ask you, where is this place? And what about your Ghost Clan?”

Kai asked Ming Li!

Mr. Shi was gone, and Kai still had many questions, so he could only ask Ming Li!

As soon as Kai finished speaking, Ming Li respectfully bowed and began to explain.

“Mr. Chen, this place is the edge of the Northern Wilderness in the Thirteenth Heaven.”

Ming Li pointed to the collapsed mountain range in the distance, his voice carrying a hint of vicissitude and desolation, “And this collapsed mountain range was originally an important ancestral land of our Ghost Clan in the Thirteenth Heaven.”

“The Thirteenth Heaven?”

Kai’s heart was shocked. He had arrived at the Thirteenth Heaven so quickly?

He was only at the Celestial Immortal Realm, and what about the requirements for reaching the Thirteenth Heaven?

How could he have arrived at the Thirteenth Heaven in such a daze?

He hadn’t even said goodbye to Jin Buhuan, Li Baichuan, Dugu Ao, and the others, and he hadn’t even had a chance to tell the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord that he was safe.

And his women…

“Exactly.”

Ming Li nodded, continuing, “As for our Ghost Clan… it’s a long story.”

He paused, gathering his thoughts, before slowly speaking: “In the vast Heavenly Realm, there are billions of living beings and numerous races. Besides common races like humans, demons, and monsters, there are some special ancient races, and our Ghost Clan is one of them.”

“The Ghost Clan is not formed from the souls of the dead, but is a race born with a close affinity to the laws of reincarnation, rebirth, and souls.”

“Our people are born with the ability to communicate between Yin and Yang, guide the souls of the dead, and hold some authority over reincarnation.”

“In the distant ancient times, the Ghost Clan was an important force in maintaining the order of life and death in the Three Realms. Recognized by the Heavenly Dao, they established clan territories in various heavens to guide and manage the souls of the dead, helping them reincarnate and be reborn.” “Then why did it happen later…” Kai looked at the surrounding collapsed mountains, his meaning self-evident.

Ming Li gave a bitter smile, pain and resentment flashing in his eyes: “The rise and fall of a dynasty is the natural order. But the decline of the Ghost Clan was not a natural disaster, but… a man-made one.” ”

About 30,000 years ago, our clan’s Ghost King at that time possessed extraordinary cultivation. He comprehended the Great Dao of Reincarnation, glimpsed a trace of the mysteries of the Heavenly Dao, and believed that the existing reincarnation order was flawed, unable to truly realize the principle of karmic retribution and the cycle of cause and effect.”

“Many heinous villains, after death, possessed powerful souls or were protected by secret techniques, often escaping punishment, and even reincarnating with their memories to continue their evil deeds.”

“While the kind and weak may suffer in reincarnation, or even have their true spirits annihilated.”

“The Ghost King of the Underworld cared for all living beings and was determined to establish an absolutely just reincarnation order.”

“He began to try to forge his own path, breaking away from the existing Heavenly Dao reincarnation system, and establishing a new reincarnation law that was completely controlled by the Ghost Clan and absolutely fair.”

“To this end, he gathered the strength of his entire clan to forge several treasures of reincarnation, including the reincarnation gate you saw.”

Kai listened intently, then couldn’t help but ask, “This is a good thing, so why did it bring disaster?”

“A good thing?”

Ming Li shook his head, his eyes full of mockery. “Mr. Chen, you are too naive. To create a new path means to forcibly extract a part of the reincarnation law from the existing Heavenly Dao laws and bring it under one’s own control.”

“This is tantamount to severing the authority of the Heavenly Dao and challenging its power!”

“Moreover, many powerful races, sects, and even individuals, having cultivated to a high level, are no longer satisfied with ordinary reincarnation. They yearn to be reincarnated with their memories and cultivation, or even to escape reincarnation and achieve immortality.”
“For

the Ghost Clan to establish an absolutely fair reincarnation system means to strip these powerful individuals and forces of their privileges in reincarnation.”

“This touches upon the interests of too many beings. The Heavenly Dao does not allow anyone to challenge its authority, and those powerful forces do not allow anyone to disrupt their plans for immortality.”

“Thus, a campaign to annihilate the Ghost Clan began, with the tacit understanding of many parties.”

Ming Li’s voice deepened. “First, the Heavenly Dao unleashed a backlash of reincarnation, hindering the Ghost Clan’s cultivation and causing their fortunes to decline.”

“Then, led by several of the most powerful divine and ancient clans at the time, dozens of major forces united to launch a full-scale purge of the Ghost Clan, citing their alleged attempt to tamper with the Heavenly Dao, disrupt the order of reincarnation, and plot treason.”

“That battle… the heavens and earth shattered, the sun and moon lost their light. Though our Ghost Clan was strong, how could we withstand the combined annihilation of the Heavenly Dao and various forces?”

“Countless ancestral lands collapsed, and clansmen perished. To protect his clansmen’s retreat, the Ghost King detonated several reincarnation treasures with his own essence, severely injuring the invading enemies, but in doing so, his soul was scattered, leaving only a wisp of his true spirit sealed deep within the Reincarnation Bureau, falling into eternal slumber.”

“Since then, the Ghost Clan has disintegrated, the surviving clansmen scattered and fled, hiding their identities, never daring to call themselves the Ghost Clan again.”

“Most of those powerful reincarnation treasures were also damaged or lost. My branch, by sheer luck, managed to escape to a hidden place in the Thirteenth Heaven with the damaged Gate of Reincarnation, barely surviving.”

Ming Li’s eyes welled up with tears as he spoke, but he quickly suppressed them.

“After ten thousand years of recuperation, our branch has barely recovered some of its vitality. But the clan’s experts have dwindled, and

the inheritance is incomplete; it is no longer as prosperous as it once was."

"I am the most talented among this generation, and the elders have high hopes for me, hoping that I can repair the Gate of Reincarnation, find a way to restore the Ghost King, and revitalize the Ghost Clan."

"Before we could repair the Gate of Reincarnation, this place was discovered. The scene you see before you is a remnant of the great battle back then."

"Fortunately, my clansmen risked their lives to send me away, and I was able to save my life!"

"So you took the Gate of Reincarnation to the Twelfth Heaven? And you pretended to be the Lord of Reincarnation, collecting souls to repair the Gate of Reincarnation?" Kai frowned. Ming Li's face showed embarrassment and shame: "Yes... at that time, the clan's resources were scarce, and repairing the Gate of Reincarnation required a massive amount of soul power. Moreover, we were discovered in the clan's territory in the Thirteenth Heaven, and it was impossible for me to stay there."

"The Twelfth Heaven is a lower realm, where the Heavenly Dao's surveillance is relatively weak, and the highest cultivation level there is no more than the Upper Immortal Realm. With my strength and the power of the Gate of Reincarnation, I could act secretly."

"I originally planned to use immortality and blessings as bait to attract cultivators to voluntarily offer their soul power, or to collect the souls of those who died in battle, to accumulate enough energy to repair the Gate of Reincarnation, and then quietly return, without causing any trouble."

"Those like Zhan E and Xue Youming are just pawns who covet power. I used them, and they were willing to do so."

"I just didn't expect..." Ming Li looked at Kai and smiled bitterly, "to meet you, Mr. Chen, and the one behind you... Mr. Shi."

Kai was silent for a moment.

He could understand Ming Li and the Ghost Clan's predicament. For survival and revival, sometimes one had to do extraordinary things.

Understanding doesn't equate to agreement. It's a fact that the Ghost Clan caused turmoil in the Twelfth Heaven, resulting in countless casualties, in their attempt to repair the Gate of Reincarnation.

"Were the souls of the Hu Clan truly sent to the Reincarnation Bureau?" Kai changed the subject.

"Absolutely,"

Ming Li quickly replied. "Mr. Shi, with his great abilities, has rescued them all and returned them to where they belonged."

"Rest assured, Mr. Chen, the souls of the Hu Clan are intact and undamaged. They have merely undergone a baptism of reincarnation, which may even benefit their cultivation in their next life."

Kai nodded, a great weight lifted from his heart.

Master Hu's request had finally been fulfilled.

He looked around at the desolate landscape, feeling the far greater and purer spiritual energy and the pressure of the laws in the Thirteenth Heaven compared to the Twelfth Heaven, his mind filled with countless thoughts.

"Mr. Shi sent me directly to the Thirteenth Heaven. It seems he thinks I have nothing more to learn in the Twelfth Heaven,"

Kai mused to himself. "The Thirteenth Heaven, the starting point of the Middle Realm, is the truly vast stage. But..."

He thought of the people still waiting for news of him in the Twelfth Heaven.

Jin Buhuan, Li Baichuan, Dugu Ao—they must still be anxiously waiting outside Reincarnation Peak, right?

And the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, who had accompanied him for so long, had now left without saying goodbye. He must be very disappointed, perhaps even thinking that he had perished in the Gate of Reincarnation.

“No, we need to find a way to send them a message.”

Kai looked at Ming Li. “Do you have a way to contact the Twelfth Heaven? Or, could you send me back?”

Ming Li looked troubled. “Mr. Chen, crossing the barrier between the two realms is extremely difficult, requiring a specific passage or token. I was able to go down with the Gate of Reincarnation thanks to a boundary-breaking talisman passed down in my clan, but that talisman can only be used once and becomes invalid afterward.”

“As for sending a message… the laws of the two realms are different, and ordinary means of communication simply cannot penetrate the barrier.”

Seeing Kai’s disappointed expression, Ming Li thought for a moment and then said, “However, Mr. Chen, you don’t need to worry too much. Since Mr. Shi sent you to the Thirteenth Heaven, he must have his reasons.”

“Friends in the Twelfth Heaven, perhaps Mr. Shi has other plans. Moreover, with your current cultivation and potential, Mr. Chen, staying in the Twelfth Heaven is indeed somewhat limiting.”

“The Thirteenth Heaven offers more opportunities and is more conducive to your growth. Once your cultivation is fully developed, you can easily return to the Twelfth Heaven.”

Kai sighed, knowing that Ming Li’s words made sense. Mr. Shi always has his reasons for doing things.

Worrying now is useless; the most urgent task is to adapt to the environment of the Thirteenth Heaven as quickly as possible and improve his strength.

“By the way, you said this is the edge of the Northern Dark Wasteland? How much do you know about the Thirteenth Heaven? Where should I go now?” Kai asked.

Being new to the place, he knew nothing about the Thirteenth Heaven and needed a guide.

Ming Li’s spirits lifted, and he said, “Mr. Chen has come to the right person. Although my Ghost Clan has declined, we have operated here for many years and have a fairly good understanding of the northern region of the Thirteen Heavens.”

“The Thirteen Heavens are vast and boundless, more than ten times the size of the twelve lower heavens combined.”

“The forces here are intricately intertwined, including ancient sects, powerful demon kingdoms, mysterious reclusive families, and of course, descendants of fallen ancient clans like ours.”

“Generally speaking, the Thirteen Heavens can be divided into five major domains: the Eastern Domain, Qingming Immortal Continent, where human cultivation sects abound;”

“The Western Domain, the Ten Thousand Demon Mountains, is demon territory; the Southern Domain, Tianhuo Yan Continent, has a harsh environment, abundant fire-attribute creatures and mineral deposits;”

“The Northern Domain is the Northern Ice Plains where we are located, with a cold climate and relatively scarce resources, but it is also relatively peaceful, a gathering place for many small forces, independent cultivators, and fallen clans;” ”

The Central Domain, Tianyuan Sacred Continent, is the most prosperous, with the richest spiritual energy, and is jointly controlled by several of the strongest forces."

"We're currently on the edge of the Northern Ice Plains. Tens of thousands of miles south, we'll see some cities and markets where cultivators gather.

The largest power in the Northern Ice Plains is the Xuanbing Palace, whose master is said to be a powerful figure at the seventh rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

Besides that, there are a few slightly weaker sects like the 'Hanpo Sect' and the 'Frost and Snow Sword Sect.'"

Kai listened attentively, memorizing this information.

A seventh-rank Upper Immortal Realm expert... that's already a top-tier powerhouse in the Twelfth Heaven, yet here he's merely the master of a regional sect. The overall strength of the Thirteenth Heaven is indeed far superior to that of the lower realms.

"Do you have any suggestions? What should I do now?"

Kai asked.

His impression of Ming Li had changed somewhat. Despite his predicament, this man didn't forget his clan's fate; he wasn't inherently bad, and he was familiar with the area—a good person to consult.

Ming Li pondered for a moment and said, "Mr. Chen is new here, and his cultivation is at the seventh rank of the Celestial Immortal Realm. He's considered a powerful figure in the Northern Underworld Ice Plains, but not quite top-tier."

"I suggest Mr. Chen find a cultivator's city to settle down in first, to learn about the local customs, power distribution, and cultivation resources."

“The common currency of the Thirteen Heavens is Yuan Crystals, which contain purer spiritual energy than spirit stones in the lower realms. If Mr. Chen has any spirit stones or materials from the lower realms, he can exchange them in the market.”

“Furthermore, the cultivation system of the Thirteen Heavens is the same as that of the lower realms, but the techniques and supernatural abilities are more profound, and the quality of pills and magic treasures is also higher.”

“If Mr. Chen wants to improve quickly, he needs to acquire higher-level techniques and resources. He could consider joining a sect, becoming a guest elder, or exploring some ancient ruins and secret realms.”

Kai nodded; these suggestions were very pertinent.

He did indeed need to settle down first and understand the environment. “And what about you? What are your plans?” Kai looked at Ming Li.

Ming Li’s expression darkened: “The Gate of Reincarnation has been lost, and I cannot explain this to my clan. My clansmen are all dead or alive; I have nowhere else to go.”

Looking at Ming Li’s dejected state, Kai recalled the plight of the Ghost Clan and felt a pang of sympathy.

This clan, once glorious, had fallen to such a state.

Kai was silent for a moment, then suddenly said, “If you have nowhere to go, you can come with me. I’m new to the Thirteenth Heaven and need someone to help me get familiar with the situation.”

Ming Li looked up sharply, staring at Kai in disbelief: “Mr. Chen…you…you don’t blame me?”

“One thing at a time,”

Kai said calmly. “What you did in the Twelfth Heaven did cause trouble. But you were only doing it for the survival of your clan; you weren’t inherently evil.”

“Now that the Gate of Reincarnation has been taken away by Mr. Shi, you’ve been punished. As long as you don’t do evil again, I, Kai, am willing to give you a chance.”

Ming Li’s eyes reddened, and he knelt down: “Mr. Chen’s great kindness is something I will never forget! I am willing to follow Mr. Chen to repay the kindness of not killing me and the favor I have shown you!”

“Get up first

,” Kai helped Ming Li up. “Let’s find a place to rest.”

“Yes!” Ming Li nodded. “Thirty thousand miles south, there is a city called Hanyuan City, one of the largest gathering places for cultivators in the southern part of the Northern Underworld Ice Plains. The city lord is a rogue cultivator at the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, so things are relatively fair.”

“Mr. Chen, may we go there first?” Ming Li pointed in a direction.

“Alright.” Kai nodded.

The Thirteenth Heaven, a new journey begins.

Kai looked at his storage ring, which contained not only the vast resources he had obtained from the ancient Qi Refiner’s cave and the Youquan Sect, but also the “Primordial Qi Refining True Scripture.”

This was his capital to establish himself in this new world.

“Senior Chi Yun, Sect Master Jin, Valley Master Li, Senior Dugu... I apologize for leaving without saying goodbye. Once I have established myself in this realm and achieved sufficient cultivation, I will definitely return to find you.”

Kai silently recited in his heart, a resolute look flashing in his eyes.

Without further hesitation, he leaped up, transforming into a streak of gray light, and sped away.

The cold wind howled, blowing his robes.

Ahead lay an unknown world, stronger opponents, and a broader stage.

Meanwhile, in the Twelfth Heaven, at the ruins of the Evil Path Palace.

On the altar atop Reincarnation Peak, the illusory image of the hundred-zhang-tall Gate of Reincarnation, three days after Kai stepped through, suddenly and violently fluctuated without warning at noon.

Then, like a bubble, it rapidly faded and dissipated, ultimately vanishing completely without a trace.

“The Gate of Reincarnation…disappeared?!”

Jin Buhuan, the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, and the others waiting outside the peak abruptly stood up, their expressions drastically changing.

They had waited for three whole days, but Kai hadn’t emerged, nor had the Gate of Reincarnation shown any unusual activity. Unexpectedly, what awaited them was the complete disappearance of the Gate of Reincarnation!

“Where’s Kai? Why didn’t Kai come out?!” Li Baichuan cried out anxiously.

Jin Buhuan’s face was pale. His divine sense frantically scanned the altar and the surrounding space, but he could no longer sense any aura related to Kai or the Gate of Reincarnation.

“Could it be…” A terrifying thought arose in everyone’s minds.

“No! Impossible!”

the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord roared, his scarlet demonic eyes filled with disbelief. “That kid is incredibly resilient! Even the ancient Qi Refiner’s cave couldn’t trap him, how could the Gate of Reincarnation possibly…”

But he couldn’t finish his sentence. The mysterious disappearance of the Gate of Reincarnation, and the vanishing of Kai, were definitely not a good omen.

The group waited for several more days, even risking entering the altar to investigate, but still found nothing.

Finally, they had to accept the cruel reality: Kai had likely disappeared along with the Gate of Reincarnation, his fate unknown.

The alliance members were filled with grief and indignation.

They had just seen hope for revenge, and the leader who led them to destroy the Evil Path Hall had left in such a way.

“Fellow Daoist Kai is a hero of our Twelfth Heaven!”

Jin Buhuan, suppressing his grief, announced to everyone, “From this day forward, the Twelfth Heaven enters a new era. We must uphold Fellow Daoist Kai’s legacy, restore order, and protect this realm!”

“Furthermore, send additional personnel to establish permanent outposts near Reincarnation Peak to monitor for any anomalies. Report any news of Fellow Daoist Kai immediately!” With

the orders issued, the alliance began to systematically take over the sphere of influence left behind by the Evil Path Hall and restore order to the Twelfth Heaven.

The turmoil triggered by the Gate of Reincarnation gradually subsided with its disappearance and Kai’s fall.

But some people would never forget the young figure who led them in a desperate counterattack, slaying a powerful Immortal with his Celestial Immortal cultivation, and finally venturing alone into the Gate of Reincarnation.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord waited outside Reincarnation Peak for several more days.

Every day, he hoped that familiar figure would suddenly appear, with that irritating smile, saying, “Senior, I’ve kept you waiting.”

But every day, he was disappointed.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord finally gave up.

He kowtowed three times heavily before the empty altar.

“Boy, you saved my life. I’ll remember this debt.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll take care of your family and friends. If you truly die inside, once I revive my beloved and achieve great cultivation, I will definitely find a way to cleave open this cycle of reincarnation and bring your remains out!”

With that, he resolutely turned, transforming into a streak of blood-red light, and flew towards the Nine Heavens.

He was going to save the woman who had waited for him for countless years.

Then, he would return to fulfill his promise.Kai and Ming Li traveled south, traversing tens of thousands of miles of the Northern Wilderness.

The further south they went, the richer and purer the spiritual energy became, far surpassing that of the Twelfth Heaven.

Kai could sense that the laws of the Thirteenth Heaven were more complete and rigorous, making cultivation twice as effective, but also demanding a higher foundation from the cultivator.

After adapting to the laws of this realm, the circulation of his Concentration Technique was actually smoother and more powerful than when he was in the Twelfth Heaven.

Three days later, a majestic ice and snow city appeared on the horizon.

The city walls were hundreds of feet high, entirely constructed of some kind of dark blue-green ice, with pale blue runes flowing across their surface, clearly indicating the presence of a powerful defensive formation.

At intervals along the city walls stood cultivators clad in ice-blue armor, their auras deep and concentrated, at least at the Heavenly Immortal realm. Above the city gate, three ancient seal characters, written in a flamboyant and elegant style,

exuded a chilling aura—"Frosty Abyss City."

"Mr. Chen, this is Hanyuan City,"

Ming Li introduced. "This city has a history of over ten thousand years and is one of the most important gathering places for cultivators in the southern part of the Northern Underworld Ice Plains, with over one hundred thousand permanent residents."

"The city lord, True Person Hanyuan, is a powerful rogue cultivator at the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm. It is said that he received the inheritance of an ancient immortal in his early years, making his strength unfathomable. Moreover, he is relatively fair and does not participate in the conflicts between major forces, which is why many rogue cultivators and small sects are willing to settle here."

Kai nodded, and the two walked towards the city gate.

Dozens of guards were checking people at the city gate. The leader was a burly, scarred man with a fierce aura, whose cultivation had clearly reached the second rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

Kai was somewhat speechless; in the Thirteenth Heaven, even Upper Immortals were only good for guarding the gate.

“Halt!”

The scarred man stopped Kai and his companion, sizing them up. “Unfamiliar faces? Where are you from? What brings you into the city?”

Kai remained calm. “I am Kai, a rogue cultivator. This is my companion, Ming Li. We are new to the Northern Ice Plains and wish to stay in the city temporarily to familiarize ourselves with the surroundings.”

“Rogue cultivator?”

The scarred man’s eyes were suspicious, and he looked at Kai intently. “Recently, the city lord has ordered a strict inspection of all outside cultivators. Do you have any identification? Or, can anyone verify your origins?”

Kai frowned slightly.

Identification?

They had just come from the twelfth heaven; where would they get thirteenth heaven identities?

Ming Li quickly stepped forward, took out a jet-black domino from his robes, and said with a forced smile, “Brother, we come from the depths of the Northern Dark Wasteland.”

“Our ancestors were a declining family, who have been living in seclusion and cultivating in the wasteland ever since. This is our ancestral emblem. We’ve come out of seclusion this time to broaden our horizons and seek some opportunities.”

The scarred man took the domino and examined it, his expression softening slightly, but he still shook his head: “Without a proper identity jade token, according to the rules, it needs to be temporarily confiscated until our identities are verified.”

“Recently, things haven’t been peaceful in the city. One of the city lord’s important magical artifacts has been stolen, and it’s suspected to be the work of outsider cultivators, so all unfamiliar faces are being strictly investigated.”

“What?” Kai was taken aback.

A magical artifact stolen? The reason sounded somewhat far-fetched.

“Brother, please be lenient.”

Ming Li secretly slipped a small bag of Yuan Crystals to him. “We are truly good cultivators, with absolutely no ill intentions.”

The scarred man weighed the bag in his hand, a glint of greed flashing in his eyes, but then he showed a troubled expression: “It’s not that I’m unwilling to be lenient, but this time the city lord has given a death order.”

“Detain all outside cultivators without clear identities . Anyone who dares to let them pass will be killed without exception. I’m just following orders, don’t make things difficult for me.”

He waved his hand: “Men, take them to the temporary detention area, we’ll talk after we’ve investigated.”

Immediately, four guards of the first rank of the Upper Immortal Realm stepped forward, holding specially made cold iron chains.

Kai’s eyes turned cold, and the chaotic power within his body fluctuated slightly.

With his current strength, these guards were no match for him, and forcibly breaking through would not be difficult.

But as a newcomer, he didn't want to cause trouble right away and become an enemy of the city lord.

"Mr. Chen, please calm down,"

Ming Li transmitted his voice. "Go with them first and see how things go. True Immortal Han Yuan has a good reputation; he shouldn't make things difficult for us without reason. Once our identities are verified, he'll naturally let us out."

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing his urge to fight, and allowed the guards to put the cold iron chains on his wrists.

A chilling sealing force emanated from the chains, attempting to seal his magic power, but the chaotic energy flowed slightly, easily dissolving the sealing force.

Kai pretended to be imprisoned and did not resist.

Ming Li did the same; he had many secret techniques of the Ghost Clan, and chains of this level couldn't restrain him at all.

The two were escorted through the bustling streets.

Han Yuan City was quite lively, with shops lining both sides of the streets, selling pills, magic weapons, and cultivation techniques, as well as restaurants, inns, and even auction houses.

The auras of the cultivators coming and going varied, but they were generally a level stronger than those of the twelfth level of the Heavenly Realm. Upper Immortals were everywhere, but not a single Heavenly Immortal was in sight.

Kai also concealed his aura, preventing others from recognizing his Celestial Immortal realm.

“It seems the Thirteenth Heaven is indeed the Middle Realm, its overall strength far surpassing the Lower Realm,” Kai thought to himself.

Soon, they were led to a heavily guarded building in the west of the city.

The building was constructed of thick, mysterious ice, heavily guarded at the entrance, with a plaque bearing the three large characters: Inspection Division.

Entering the Inspection Division, they passed through several dimly lit corridors and were pushed into a huge cell.

Dozens of cultivators, men, women, and children, were already imprisoned inside, their cultivation levels ranging from the first and second ranks of the Upper Immortal Realm, and even including some at the third rank. These cultivators all wore expressions of fear, anger, or resentment.

The walls of the cell were covered with sealing runes, and a suffocating atmosphere permeated the air. ”Two more unlucky souls.”

“Sigh, when will this ever end…” ”

Is True Immortal Han Yuan truly determined to purge all the outside cultivators this time?”

The prisoners whispered among themselves, their gazes towards Kai and Ming Li a mixture of pity and indifference.

Kai found a corner to sit down, closed his eyes to rest, and secretly observed the situation in the cell.

Ming Li, on the other hand, approached a few prisoners who seemed more approachable and quietly inquired about the situation.

“Fellow Daoists, what exactly is going on? We were arrested as soon as we entered the city, and they say the city lord lost a magic weapon?” Ming Li asked.

An old cultivator with a withered face smiled bitterly: “What lost magic weapon? That’s just an excuse! The real purpose is to purge all cultivators from the Eastern Region, or anyone who might have connections to the Eastern Region!”

“The Eastern Region? Qingming Immortal Continent?” Kai opened his eyes.

“Exactly.”

The old cultivator lowered his voice. “True Master Hanyuan received a secret report that the major human sects of Qingming Immortal Continent have been making frequent moves recently, seemingly secretly gathering forces to expand their territory into the Northern Ice Plains.”

“They may have already sent many spies to infiltrate Hanyuan City to gather intelligence, and even prepare for an inside-outside attack.” ”

Therefore, the city lord would rather kill the innocent than let the guilty go free, arresting all the cultivators who recently entered the city and whose identities are unknown.”

“Especially those of us who fled from the Eastern Region… Alas, what an undeserved disaster!”

“Fleeing?”

Kai keenly grasped this word. “Qingming Immortal Continent is a holy land for human cultivation, why would we flee?”

The old cultivator looked around, lowering his voice even further: “Fellow Daoist, you may not know, but Qingming Immortal Continent is no longer ruled by humans!”

“About several hundred years ago, a group of self-proclaimed divine cultivators controlled Qingming Immortal Continent. They were powerful, of noble blood, and extremely arrogant, looking down on us humans.”

“The divine race?”

Kai’s eyes narrowed.

The divine race again!

Wan Jianxing was imprisoned by the patriarch of the Divine Race!

“That’s right, the Divine Race.”

Fear and resentment flashed in the old cultivator’s eyes. “They used some unknown means to control the high-ranking members of several top sects in the Azure Nether Immortal Continent. Now, the entire Azure Nether Immortal Continent is nominally ruled by human sects, but in reality, it’s all being manipulated by the Divine Race.”

“They ruthlessly oppress human cultivators, plunder resources, and brutally suppress any resistance. Many sect disciples and rogue cultivators couldn’t bear it and fled.”

“We couldn’t stand the oppression of the Divine Race, and we barely escaped with our lives to the relatively peaceful Northern Nether Ice Plains, hoping to settle down here. Unexpectedly… we’ve just escaped one danger only to fall into another!” The old cultivator’s eyes reddened as he spoke.

A young cultivator beside him excitedly interjected, “Those bastards from the Divine Race don’t treat us like human beings at all! They say we’re an inferior race, only fit to be their slaves!”

“My master was turned into a puppet because he refused to submit! I must take revenge!”

“Keep your voice down!”

the old cultivator quickly covered his mouth. “Walls have ears! If the guards hear us, we’re dead!”

Kai listened silently, his heart churning with turmoil.

The Divine Race... truly arrogant and domineering! “Isn’t anyone going to do anything about it? What about the major powers in the Central Region’s Tianyuan Sacred Continent?” Ming Li asked.

“Do what? Who’s going to do anything?”

The old cultivator smiled bitterly. “The Divine Race has a mysterious origin and immense strength. It’s said they have powerful backers in the Central Region.”

“Moreover, they don’t directly rule the Azure Nether Immortal Continent on the surface; they only indirectly control it by controlling human sects.”

“Those major powers don’t care; they’re indifferent. As long as we don’t infringe on their core interests, who would stand up for us small cultivators and sects?”

A heavy silence fell over the cell.

Just then, the cell door was flung open, and a group of fierce-looking guards rushed in.

“Everyone, get up! Line up!”

the head guard captain shouted sternly.

“What? Are they letting us out?” someone asked hopefully.

“Release them?”

The guard captain sneered. “The city lord has ordered that all suspected spies be taken to the execution platform at the northernmost point of the city and executed on the spot as a warning to others!”

“What?!” ”

Injustice! We're not spies!"

"Master Hanyuan, you can't kill innocent people

indiscriminately!" The cell erupted in chaos, filled with cries, curses, and pleas for mercy.

"Shut up!"

The guard captain lashed a whip at the loudest cultivator, tearing his skin. "Any further disturbance will result in immediate execution! Take them all away!"

The guards rushed forward like wolves, shackling each prisoner with heavier chains and forcibly dragging them out of the cell.

Kai's eyes were icy.

He had originally wanted to wait for identity verification, but now it seemed that the City Lord of Hanyuan was determined to use this as an excuse to purge outsider cultivators.

Since that was the case, he couldn't just sit and wait to die.

"Mr. Chen, what should we do?"

Ming Li asked telepathically, a hint of killing intent flashing in his eyes.

Although he was a ghost, he was not one to be slaughtered at will.

"We'll see how things unfold," Kai replied calmly.

The group was escorted through the frigid streets towards the north of the city.

A large number of onlookers gathered on both sides of the street, pointing and whispering, but no one dared to stop them.

Clearly, the Lord of Hanyuan City held absolute authority in Hanyuan City.

Soon, the group was led to a massive high platform. The high platform, constructed of millennia-old black ice, exuded a chilling aura. Thick ice pillars stood in the center, stained with dark red blood – this was the "Execution Platform," the place where Cold Abyss City executed serious criminals.

Below the platform, thousands of cultivators, both residents of Cold Abyss City and outsiders, had gathered to watch the spectacle.

Directly in front of the platform lay an ice jade throne, currently empty.

Clearly, the City Lord, True Person Cold Abyss, had not yet arrived.

"Kneel!"

The guards forcibly pressed the prisoner to the ground, facing the throne.

"The City Lord has arrived!" a loud shout rang out.

From afar, a streak of icy blue light pierced the air and landed before the throne.

The light dissipated, revealing a middle-aged Taoist priest in an icy blue robe, with a gaunt face and a cold, aloof demeanor.

His eyes gleamed with a sharp light, his aura unfathomable – it was none other than True Person Cold Abyss, the City Lord of Cold Abyss City, a fifth-rank Upper Immortal!

With his arrival, the temperature around the execution platform plummeted, an invisible pressure enveloping the entire area, and the noisy crowd immediately fell silent.

Master Hanyuan coldly swept his gaze over the dozens of prisoners on the platform, as if looking at a group of ants.

“Lord City Lord! We’re innocent! We’re not spies from Qingming Immortal Continent! We were forced to flee here by the oppression of the gods!”

The young cultivator could no longer hold back, shouting hoarsely, his voice shrill.

“Insolence! You dare to argue even when death is imminent!” The guard captain stepped forward to attack.

“Wait,” Master Hanyuan said calmly.

The guard captain immediately stopped, bowed, and retreated.

Master Hanyuan looked at the young cultivator, his voice icy:
“Oppression by the Divine Race? Escape? How would I know? Isn’t this just an excuse you fabricated to infiltrate Hanyuan City?”

“If Qingming Immortal Continent is truly controlled by the Divine Race, why hasn’t any news spread from the Eastern Region?”

“Because the Divine Race’s power is immense; they’ve sealed off the news! Anyone who dared to spread it has been silenced!”

the young cultivator exclaimed excitedly. “If the City Lord doesn’t believe us, you can send someone to Qingming Immortal Continent to investigate! We are willing to swear on our Dao hearts that if we utter even a single falsehood, may we be struck down by heaven and earth, never to be reincarnated!”

The other prisoners also swore oaths, tears streaming down their faces.

Master Hanyuan frowned slightly, seemingly wavering.

He wasn't a bloodthirsty person; this purge was due to immense pressure. If Qingming Immortal Continent was truly preparing to invade the north, Hanyuan City would be the first to bear the brunt, and he had to ensure there were no traitors within the city.

But what if... these people were truly innocent?

Just then, Kai spoke.

His voice wasn't loud, yet it carried clearly throughout the entire area, possessing a strange calmness and power:

"Lord Hanyuan, what they said is true."

Whoosh!

All eyes instantly focused on Kai.

Hanyuan Zhenren's gaze was like lightning as he looked at Kai: "And who are you? How can you be so certain?"

Kai slowly rose.

The cold iron shackles on his wrists had already been quietly shattered by the power of chaos, and now they were merely resting on his hands.

This rise immediately tensed the surrounding guards.

"Insolence! Kneel down!"

the guard captain shouted, slapping Kai's shoulder, trying to force him back down. Kai didn't even glance at him, casually raising his left hand and lightly tapping with his index finger.

Poof!

The guard captain's palm, powerful enough to split mountains and shatter rocks, abruptly stopped three inches from Kai's shoulder.

He was frozen in place, as if under a spell, his face contorted in a ferocious expression, his eyes filled with terror. He found himself completely immobilized, even his internal magical power had solidified!

“Hmm?”

Han Yuan Zhenren’s eyes narrowed, revealing a serious expression for the first time.

He saw that Kai’s finger strike contained an extremely obscure and advanced power, instantly sealing the entire cultivation of a second-grade Upper Immortal!

Moreover, Kai’s realm was revealed the moment he made his move—a seventh-grade Heavenly Immortal!

“I am Kai, from the twelfth heaven of the lower realm,”

Kai calmly looked at Han Yuan Zhenren. “As for why I’m so sure… because I have an old grudge against the Divine Race.”

He flicked his wrist, and the seemingly fixed cold iron chain shattered inch by inch, turning into scattering ice shards.

At the same time, a vast, boundless, and seemingly all-encompassing chaotic aura slowly emanated from him.

This aura wasn’t domineering, yet it caused all the cultivators present, including True Person Hanyuan, to feel a pressure originating from the level of life itself!

“What… what power is this?”

True Person Hanyuan was shaken.

He had cultivated for thousands of years, witnessing various techniques and supernatural abilities, but he had never felt such a peculiar and primal power!

“The power of chaos,”

Kai said calmly. “The City Lord should be able to sense that this power is fundamentally different from the powers of reincarnation, the divine race, and so on. If I were truly a spy from the Azure Nether Immortal Continent, why would I cultivate such an incompatible power?”

True Person Hanyuan remained silent.

Indeed, the aura of chaotic power was too special, unlike any known cultivation system, and could not possibly be a disguise.

“As for them…”

Kai pointed to the prisoners, “If the City Lord doesn’t believe me, I can vouch for them. If it is later proven that any one of them is a spy, I, Kai, am willing to accept any punishment.”

“You vouch for them? What qualifications do you, a mere Celestial Immortal, have to vouch for them?”

True Person Hanyuan narrowed his eyes.

“Just because I was able to come to the Thirteenth Heaven from the Lower Realm,”

Kai said calmly, “isn’t the City Lord curious about how I broke through the barrier between the two realms and arrived here with the cultivation of a Celestial Immortal?”

These words finally moved True Person Han Yuan!

The barrier between the two realms, the membrane of the laws!

These are hard rules!

Lower Realm cultivators, without reaching the Upper Immortal Realm and without sufficient comprehension of the laws, simply cannot come to the Middle Realm!

Forcing their way in will only result in being crushed by the laws!

This Kai, able to arrive at the Thirteenth Heaven with only the seventh rank of the Celestial Immortal Realm, has only two possibilities: either he has an unimaginably powerful figure assisting him, or he himself is so special that the laws give him special treatment!

Either way, it means this person is definitely not simple! Master Hanyuan's expression shifted, and finally, he took a deep breath and waved his hand: "Release them."

"City Lord?" The other guards were astonished.

"I said, release them,"

Master Hanyuan repeated, his voice carrying an unquestionable authority.

The guards dared not disobey and quickly unlocked all the prisoners' shackles.

The prisoners, having escaped death, cast grateful glances at Kai, some even kneeling to thank him.

"You, come with me,"

Master Hanyuan said to Kai, then glanced at Ming Li, "and your companion."

With that, he transformed into a streak of icy blue light and flew towards the City Lord's Mansion.

Kai nodded to Ming Li, and the two of them also took to the air, following closely behind.

Leaving behind the survivors on the execution platform, and the stunned onlookers below.

“Who was that person just now?” ”

A seventh-grade Celestial Immortal, actually managed to make Master Hanyuan change his mind?”

“His aura was terrifying…”

“It seems that Hanyuan City is about to change…”

…

City Lord’s Mansion, Reception Hall.

Master Hanyuan dismissed his attendants, leaving only Kai and Ming Li.

He personally poured Kai a cup of spiritual tea, his attitude completely different from before: “Fellow Daoist Chen, please forgive my rudeness earlier. I’ve been under too much pressure lately and have had to be cautious.”

Kai accepted the teacup and said calmly, “You’re too kind, City Lord. I understand your concerns.”

Master Hanyuan sat down, his gaze fixed intently on Kai: “Fellow Daoist Chen, let’s not beat around the bush. How exactly did you arrive at the Thirteenth Heaven? What kind of inheritance does your Chaos Power possess? And… you mentioned having an old grudge against the Divine Race, could you elaborate?” Kai took

a sip of tea, pondered for a moment, and decided to reveal part of the truth.

Master Hanyuan’s change in attitude clearly indicated his intention to befriend him, and he also seemed to have no goodwill towards the Divine Race.

“I come from the twelfth heaven of the lower realm. I was able to come to this realm with the help of a senior.”

Kai vaguely mentioned Mr. Shi’s existence. “As for the power of chaos, I obtained it by chance.”

“As for the gods… I had some conflicts with them when I was in the lower realm.” ”

A friend of mine, named Wan Jianxing, was imprisoned by the patriarch of the gods.”

“I came to the thirteenth heaven this time not only for training but also to cause trouble for those gods.”

“Wan Jianxing… I’ve never heard of him.”

True Person Hanyuan shook his head. “However, the gods are indeed arrogant and domineering. Not only in Qingming Immortal Continent, but also throughout the thirteenth heaven, and even higher heavens, they have a bad reputation. They consider themselves of noble blood, regard other races as servants, act domineeringly, and have made countless enemies.”

He changed the subject: “Fellow Daoist Chen, were you sincere in guaranteeing those Eastern Region cultivators just now?” “Of course.”

Kai nodded. “I believe what they said. Moreover, I deeply abhor the ways of the Divine Race.”

A hint of appreciation flashed in Han Yuan Zhenren’s eyes: “Good! Fellow Daoist Chen is straightforward and a man of principle! Since that’s the case, I will trust you this once. I will properly settle those Eastern Region cultivators and will not make things difficult for them again.”

“Thank you, City Lord.” Kai cupped his hands in thanks.

“However…”

Han Yuan Zhenren’s expression turned solemn. “The situation in Qingming Immortal Continent is probably even more severe than they say. I have received some secret intelligence; the Divine Race seems to be plotting something big in Qingming Immortal Continent, not just simple territorial expansion.”

“They may very well be using Qingming Immortal Continent as a springboard to gradually erode the entire Thirteen Heavens!”

Kai frowned. “If that’s the case, we must stop them.”

“It’s difficult.”

Han Yuan Zhenren sighed. “The Divine Race is powerful and has a deep foundation. My Han Yuan City alone, or even the entire Northern Ice Plains, can hardly contend with them. Unless… we can unite with other major regions to fight them together.”

He looked at Kai, a hint of expectation flashing in his eyes. “Fellow Daoist Chen, although you are only a Celestial Immortal, your strength is extraordinary, your potential is limitless, and you also have an old grudge against the Divine Race.”

“I wonder if you would be interested in going to Qingming Immortal Continent to secretly investigate the Divine Race’s strength and true purpose? If you can obtain conclusive evidence, I can contact the forces of the Central Region and other major regions to deal with them together.”

Kai’s heart stirred.

He was already planning to go to Qingming Immortal Continent to find Senior Musha, and investigating the situation of the Divine Race was also part of his plan.

Now, with Han Yuan Zhenren's request and support, it would be much easier to proceed.

"Alright," Kai agreed. "I was already planning to go to Qingming Immortal Continent. Firstly, to find an old friend; secondly, to investigate the true strength of the Divine Race and find a way to help my imprisoned senior escape."

"Excellent!"

Han Yuan Zhenren was overjoyed. "Fellow Daoist Chen, please just ask for any support you need! I also have several secret contact points in Qingming Immortal Continent that can provide you with assistance."

The two discussed some details, and Han Yuan Zhenren gave Kai a brief map of Qingming Immortal Continent, contact information, and a considerable amount of Yuan Crystals as travel expenses.

It was already late when they left the City Lord's Mansion.

"Mr. Chen, are we really going to Qingming Immortal Continent?"

Ming Li asked, somewhat worried. "That place is now a den of dragons and tigers controlled by the gods."

"We must go."

Kai looked eastward, his gaze firm. "Not only do we want to find Senior Mu Sha, but we also want to see just how arrogant the gods really are."

"Besides, with you here, what am I afraid of? You can just reincarnate those gods directly."

Upon hearing this, Ming Li's face immediately turned embarrassed: "Mr. Chen, don't joke around. I'm only at the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm. If it weren't for the Gate of Reincarnation, I'm afraid I wouldn't be your match."

Kai was speechless. It seemed this guy was just showing off with the Gate of Reincarnation, even calling himself the Lord of Reincarnation. He really dared to call himself that.

However, the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm was still a top-tier existence in the Twelfth Heaven. “Thank you for saving our lives, fellow Daoist…”

At this moment, an old man arrived with a group of cultivators, who immediately knelt before Kai.

These were all people who were about to be beheaded, and they were only saved because Kai had saved their lives.

“Fellow Daoists, please don’t be so polite. You have been wronged. I will investigate this matter thoroughly in Qingming Immortal Continent and bring you justice,”

Kai said, helping the group up.

“Fellow Daoist, I know you are a good person, but you still shouldn’t go to Qingming Immortal Continent. You will lose your life.”

“These days, everyone in the various sects of Qingming Immortal Continent is living in fear. Not long ago, two cultivators were publicly beheaded for breaking through the barrier and going to the Twelfth Heaven without permission,”

the old man advised Kai.

“Beheaded? Two cultivators went to the Twelfth Heaven?” Kai’s heart sank.

“May I ask, sir, were those two cultivators a man and a woman?”

Kai asked nervously.

“How did you know?”

the old man asked, somewhat surprised.

Kai's body trembled slightly involuntarily. He thought of Mu Sha and his wife; the two of them had gone to the Twelfth Heaven for his sake, but returned after a short stay.

Could it be them?

Were they also in the Azure Nether Immortal Continent?

"Mr. Chen, do you know those two cultivators?" Ming Li, who was beside him, seemed to notice Kai's unusual mood and asked.

"I don't know, I don't know if they are people I know."

Kai shook his head, then looked at the old man and asked, "Uncle, do you know where in the Azure Nether Immortal Continent those two were beheaded?"

"Of course, in Jade Immortal City in the Eastern Azure Nether Immortal Continent. That's the territory of the Jade Immortal Palace. We escaped from that place,"

the old man said.

"Then, uncle, do you know who beheaded those two cultivators?"

Kai asked anxiously.

The old man shook his head: "Then I don't know. I've only heard about it; I haven't seen it with my own eyes."

"Thank you!" Kai cupped his hands in thanks to the old man, then looked at Ming Li and said, "Ming Li, let's go to Jade Immortal City in Qingming Immortal Continent immediately..."

Before Kai finished speaking, he vanished in a streak of light.

Ming Li quickly followed.

At this moment, Kai was extremely anxious, and at the same time, he hoped that the two cultivators weren't Mu Sha and his wife.

Otherwise, he would raze the entire Qingming Immortal Continent and annihilate all the gods.

Kai and Ming Li traveled at full speed, traversing the vast buffer zone between the Northern Ice Plains and Qingming Immortal Continent, and finally, seven days later, arrived at Jade Immortal City on the western edge of Qingming Immortal Continent. Jade Immortal City and Cold Abyss City are completely different in style.

Instead of ice and snow, it boasts a serene and ever-spring-like landscape.

The city walls, constructed of pure white jade, soar into the clouds, their surfaces shimmering with a pale blue spiritual light.

Within the city, spiritual energy abounds, with magnificent palaces and pavilions standing side by side, and cranes and other mythical birds soaring among them—a truly celestial scene.

However, upon entering the city, Kai keenly sensed a suppressed and tense atmosphere beneath this peaceful facade.

Although there were many cultivators on the streets, most were in a hurry, exchanging few words, their eyes filled with wariness and aloofness.

Occasionally, small teams of cultivators, dressed in uniform blue robes and exuding a sharp aura, patrolled, their chests embroidered with the words "Jade Immortal," their eyes sharply scanning passersby—these were the enforcement disciples of the Jade Immortal Palace.

Concerned for the safety of Mu Sha and his wife, Kai had no time to observe the city. He immediately grabbed a passing middle-aged

cultivator, cupped his hands, and asked, “Fellow Daoist, may I ask if, recently, there was… was there any public beheading of cultivators in the city? A man and a woman, no less?”

Upon hearing this, the middle-aged cultivator’s face changed drastically, as if he had seen a ghost. He waved his hands repeatedly, “I don’t know, I’ve never heard of it! Fellow Daoist, you’ve come to the wrong person!”

With that, he hurriedly left without looking back, as if avoiding a plague.

Kai frowned deeply and asked several more cultivators, with the same result.

Whenever the words “beheading” or “a man and a woman” were mentioned, the other party either vehemently denied it or looked terrified and hurried away, as if this topic were some kind of taboo.

“It seems this matter is a closely guarded secret in Jade Immortal City; ordinary cultivators dare not discuss it at all,”

Ming Li whispered. “Mr. Chen, this place is not like Cold Abyss City. Under the influence of the Divine Race, I’m afraid everyone is on edge.”

“Then how can I inquire?” Kai was extremely anxious.

“Every major city where cultivators gather has its shady dealings.”

A glint of malice flashed in Ming Li’s eyes. “Information selling, black market transactions, underground gambling… as long as you have money or enough power, you can always find something in these places. As far as I know, there’s a special information trading place called Zhiwen Pavilion in the dark alleys of the western district of Jade Immortal City.”

“Lead the way!” Kai said without hesitation.

The two walked through streets and alleys, avoiding the bustling main streets, and arrived at a relatively secluded area in the west of the city, with low and messy buildings.

The streets here were narrow and damp, and the air was filled with a strange smell of mildew mixed with the stench of cheap pills and blood.

The pedestrians were dressed plainly, even somewhat tattered, and their eyes were mostly mercenary, wary, or fierce, completely out of place with the immortal atmosphere of the main city.

At the end of the deepest alley, there was an inconspicuous little shop with a mottled wooden plaque hanging above the door, on which the three characters Zhiwen Pavilion were written in blurred dark red paint.

There were no guards at the entrance, but Kai could sense that several hidden security measures and isolation barriers were in place around the shop.

Pushing open the door, he found the interior dimly lit, with only a single, dim oil lamp flickering on the counter.

Behind the counter sat a hunched old man with a scarred face, squinting as he wiped a black dagger in his hand with a dirty cloth.

The old man's aura was subtle, but Kai could sense that his cultivation was at least at the third rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

"Buying information, or selling information?"

the old man asked without looking up, his voice hoarse and broken. "I want information."

Kai stepped forward. "About the public beheading of two cultivators, a man and a woman, in Jade Immortal City not long ago. I need the details, who the executioners were, and where their bodies are." The old man paused

slightly in wiping his dagger, raising his eyelids. His cloudy eyes scrutinized Kai and Ming Li, lingering on Kai for a moment, seemingly surprised by his Heavenly Immortal cultivation.

“This information… is very expensive,” the old man said slowly.

“How much?” Kai asked.

The old man held up three fingers: “Thirty thousand high-grade Yuan Crystals.”

“Thirty thousand?”

Ming Li gasped.

Even in the Thirteenth Heaven, high-grade Yuan Crystals were hard currency. Thirty thousand high-grade Yuan Crystals were enough to buy a decent high-grade magic weapon, or to support an ordinary cultivator’s luxurious cultivation for decades!

This was outrageous!

Kai frowned.

The Yuan Crystals he had were sponsored by True Person Han Yuan, plus the spirit stones and immortal stones he brought from the Twelfth Heaven, totaling only a little over five thousand high-grade Yuan Crystals, far from enough.

“Can I use other treasures as collateral?” Kai asked.

The old man shook his head: “This shop only accepts Yuan Crystals, no credit, no collateral.”

A cold glint flashed in Kai’s eyes, and the chaotic power within his body fluctuated faintly.

He was extremely anxious at the moment, and being so difficult to deal with, he could hardly suppress the urge to forcefully interrogate him.

“Mr. Chen!”

Ming Li quickly transmitted his voice to stop him, “This place is heavily restricted, this old fellow’s cultivation level is unknown, and he may have a powerful backer. Forcing a move could cause unforeseen circumstances, and might even alarm the Jade Immortal Palace or even the Divine Race!”

Kai took a deep breath, forcing himself to calm down.

Ming Li was right, this was territory controlled by the Divine Race, and caution was necessary.

Just then, the curtain on the inside of the shop was suddenly lifted, and a young cultivator with a bruised and swollen face and tattered clothes was kicked out, staggering and falling to the ground.

“Get out! If you dare to try to fool me with false information again, I’ll break your legs next time!”

A rude curse came from behind the curtain.

The young cultivator, with a mournful face, scrambled out of the shop.

Kai’s heart stirred, and he said to the old man, “We’ll discuss the news later.”

With that, he pulled Ming Li and turned to leave.

The two quickly caught up with the young cultivator who had been thrown out, blocking his way at the corner of the alley.

The young cultivator was startled, looking at Kai and Ming Li warily: “You… what do you want? I have no money!”

“Fellow Daoist, don’t be alarmed.”

Kai tried to soften his tone, taking out a small bag of Yuan Crystals, containing about a few dozen mid-grade Yuan Crystals. “We just want to ask you something; this is our payment.”

Seeing the Yuan Crystals, the young cultivator's eyes lit up, but he immediately looked around warily, lowering his voice: "This isn't the place to talk. Follow me."

He led Kai and Ming Li through a maze of turns, arriving at an even more dilapidated, almost collapsing abandoned hut.

"What do you two want to ask?"

the young cultivator asked eagerly, closing the door, his eyes frequently glancing at the Yuan Crystal bag in Kai's hand.

"About the recent beheading of two cultivators in Jade Immortal City, a man and a woman, what do you know?" Kai got straight to the point.

The young cultivator's face turned deathly pale in an instant, and he shook his head repeatedly: "I don't know! I don't know anything! This is something you can't ask about, or you'll lose your head!" Kai handed the Yuan Crystal bag to him: "Just tell me, and these are yours. And we guarantee we won't reveal that you told us."

The young cultivator looked at the Yuan Crystal, his eyes filled with even more struggle.

He clearly needed the money, but he was even more afraid of getting into trouble.

Kai added fuel to the fire: "We just want to know the general outline, like... the execution location? That shouldn't be considered a top secret, right? Once we know the location, we'll find a way to investigate ourselves."

The young cultivator gritted his teeth, grabbed the Yuan Crystal bag, and said rapidly, "The execution location is at Fallen Soul Slope, three hundred miles east of the city! That's where the Jade Immortal Mansion deals with serious criminals, it's very sinister!"

“Those killed there are said to have their souls imprisoned, never to be reincarnated! That’s all I know, I really don’t know anything else! Please, please stop asking!”

After saying that, he flung open the door like a startled rabbit and ran away without looking back.

“Falled Soul Slope… soul imprisonment…”

Kai chewed on these words, his unease growing stronger.

Senior Musa and his wife possessed profound cultivation; if it were an ordinary beheading, their methods might offer a sliver of hope.

But in this perilous place specifically targeting the soul…

“Mr. Chen, what do we do now?” Ming Li asked.

“To Fallen Soul Slope!”

Kai declared resolutely, “I want to see them alive, or… I want to find their trace!”

Without further delay, the two immediately left the city and sped eastward.

Three hundred miles was but a short distance for them.

When Kai saw the place known as Fallen Soul Slope, his heart sank.

It was a low-lying slope nestled between two barren mountains, not large in area, but permeated with an intense, impenetrable aura of death.

A layer of gray mist shrouded the slope year-round, preventing sunlight from penetrating.

The ground was barren, the soil an ominous dark red, as if stained countless times with blood.

In the air, countless mournful, desperate wails and curses could be faintly heard—the unwilling cries of countless souls who had perished here over the years, their spirits imprisoned.

In the center of the slope stood several bloodstained black stone pillars, bound with thick chains engraved with runes.

That was clearly the execution ground.

Kai suppressed the trembling and anger in his heart and landed on the slope.

The soil beneath his feet was soft and sticky, as if he were stepping on rotting flesh.

The omnipresent wails of the ghostly spirits became even clearer, piercing his soul like needles, but were easily blocked by the power of chaos.

He walked to the black stone pillars and examined them carefully.

Besides the old bloodstains, there were many recent marks on the pillars.

There were drag marks on the ground, scorch marks from magical attacks, and… several broken, unusual fragments of clothing.

Kai picked up a fragment of clothing.

It was woven from extremely tough celestial silkworm silk mixed with some kind of ice-attribute spiritual silk, and still retained a faint but pure aura.

This aura… was somewhat similar to the weathered, gentle, and peaceful magical aura emanating from Senior Musa, but it seemed even weaker and more chaotic.

The other fragment carried a gentle and tranquil wood-attribute life force aura, matching the f ”It’s them…it really is them…”

Kai's hand, clutching the shards, trembled slightly, his nails almost digging into his palm.

Although he had a premonition, the piercing pain and overwhelming rage upon confirmation still nearly overwhelmed him.

Senior Mu Sha, the one he had saved on the Heavenly Ladder, who appeared at the crucial moment of the Twelfth Heaven, guiding him to the ancient Qi Refiner's cave, revealing the secrets of the Heavenly Realm, a gentle and unfathomable senior...and his wife, who had just been resurrected and was full of hope for the future...

had actually been...in this filthy, gloomy Fallen Soul Slope.

"Where's the body? Why isn't there a body?"

Ming Li asked, puzzled after carefully searching the surroundings.

Even if beheaded, a body should still remain.

Even if disposed of, there should be traces.

Kai forced himself to calm down, spreading his divine sense and scanning the entire Fallen Soul Slope inch by inch.

Soon, he discovered an extremely subtle spatial fluctuation beneath the base of a stone pillar.

The fluctuations were masked by a dense aura of death and resentment, almost imperceptible to him had it not been for his keen senses and possession of chaotic power.

"There's something below,"

Kai said in a deep voice, his fingers forming a sword shape as chaotic power condensed, and he lightly sliced towards the base.

Swoosh!

The sturdy black stone pillar base was easily sliced open, revealing a deep, narrow opening extending downwards, barely wide enough for one person to pass through.

A more concentrated and pure aura of death and resentment, mixed with a trace of… strange spatial power, surged forth from the opening.

The edges of the opening were protected by extremely sophisticated concealment and sealing restrictions; if Kai hadn't violently broken through them with chaotic power, ordinary cultivators would never have noticed.

"Is this… a passage leading underground? Or… an entrance to some kind of space?" Ming Li asked, filled with doubt.

Kai didn't answer. He took a deep breath and leaped into the opening first.

Ming Li followed closely behind.

The opening wasn't vertically downwards, but rather a narrow, sloping passage with smooth walls, as if eroded by some force over a long period.

The deeper one descends, the heavier the deathly aura and resentment become, and the more pronounced the strange spatial fluctuations become.

After descending about a hundred feet, the space suddenly opens up, revealing a vast underground space.

In the center of this space is a circular blood pool about ten feet in diameter.

The liquid in the pool is viscous like paste, dark red in color, constantly bubbling, emitting a nauseating stench and overwhelming resentment.

Above the blood pool, countless faint, distorted grayish-white specks of light float, fragments of souls imprisoned here, unable to be reborn. They struggle and wail silently, radiating endless pain and despair.

Directly above the blood pool, in the dome of this space, is a fist-sized, constantly rotating grayish-white rhomboid crystal.

The crystal exudes a rich aura of the laws of reincarnation, originating from the same source as the Gate of Reincarnation that Ming Li previously controlled, but far purer and more powerful!

It is this crystal, combined with the blood pool and the unique terrain of Fallen Soul Slope, that forms a terrifying “Soul Refining Array,” continuously extracting, refining, and imprisoning the souls of those who have died here!

Kai’s gaze was fixed on the edge of the blood pool.

There, scattered were fragments of clothing and belongings.

A broken, ancient-style longsword. It was the one Senior Mu Sha always carried with him.

A warm, jade hairpin, still retaining a trace of gentle wood spirit aura, belonged to Mu Sha’s wife.

There were other scattered items and fragments of clothing, all bearing the unique aura of Mu Sha and his wife.

However, there was no corpse.

“The corpse… was thrown into the blood pool to be refined?” Ming Li’s voice was dry.

Kai did not answer. He walked step by step to the edge of the blood pool. With each step, the killing intent on his body intensified, and the chaotic aura around him surged uncontrollably, annihilating all the deathly and resentful energy that approached.

He bent down and picked up the broken longsword.eeling Musa's wife gave off. On the broken sword, the last faint trace of Musa's divine will remained, conveying a brief, angry, resentful, and desperate worry for his wife before... abruptly ceasing.

"Aaaaaah—!!!"

Kai roared to the heavens, a suppressed scream like that of a wounded beast!

Boundless rage, grief, self-reproach, and killing intent erupted within him like a volcano!

His eyes instantly turned bloodshot, and chaotic energy surged violently around him, the gray currents sweeping across the entire underground space, violently churning the blood pool!

"The Divine Race... Jade Immortal Palace... Good! Very good!"

Kai's voice was as cold as the ice of the deepest hell, each word seemingly carrying a deep-seated hatred and a blood oath.

"Senior Musa... I, Kai, swear I will not rest until this grudge is avenged!"

"I want this Jade Immortal City, not a single chicken or dog left alive! I want all the lackeys of the divine race

in the Azure Nether Immortal Continent to be buried with you!" A violent killing intent soared into the sky, even breaking through the ground, forming a gray vortex of killing intent above Fallen Soul Slope!

Ming Li watched in horror.

He had never seen Kai so out of control, so enraged. That terrifying killing intent even made him, a fifth-grade Upper Immortal, feel a chill.

He knew that Kai was truly enraged this time.

The Azure Nether Immortal Continent was likely to be engulfed in an unprecedented bloodbath.

And all of this was just the beginning.

Kai slowly straightened up and carefully put away the belongings of Musa and his wife.

The crimson in his eyes gradually faded, but the coldness and killing intent in them deepened and became even more terrifying.

“Ming Li.” His voice was calm, but it carried an unquestionable command.

“Yes!” Ming Li quickly replied.

“Investigate!”

Kai said, enunciating each word clearly. “Use all means at your disposal to find out who from the Jade Immortal Palace carried out the execution that day, and who gave the order.”

“What connection do they have with the Divine Race? Find out every single participant, leave no one out!”

“Yes!” Ming Li solemnly accepted the order. He knew that Kai at this moment was like a volcano about to erupt.

“This harmful thing shouldn’t be allowed to live…”

Kai looked at the secret passage before him, his eyes filled with murderous intent.

“Mr. Chen, we shouldn’t touch this place, otherwise we’ll be noticed very quickly.”

“To find out the identity of the beheaded person and who gave the order, we need to unite with other forces.”

Ming Li advised Kai.

Kai slowly regained his composure. He knew that his anger was useless.

“Contact which forces?” Kai asked.

“Now that Qingming Immortal Continent has become like this, everyone is in danger. It’s impossible that no one is secretly resisting.”

“If we find a resistance organization and unite with them, and have them help us gather information, wouldn’t that be twice as effective?”

Ming Li said.

“That’s right, then let’s go find that kid who sells information.”

Kai knew that to contact such a force, they needed an intermediary; otherwise, they would have no chance of meeting them.

And that kid who dared to sell fake information at the Zhiwen Pavilion was a good choice!

Chapter 5991 - 5995

Kai and Ming Li returned to the dark alley in the western district of Jade Immortal City and found the abandoned hut.

The young cultivator was hiding inside, counting his Yuan Crystals. Seeing the two return, he was so startled he nearly scattered them all over the floor.

“You two…you two seniors, I really only know that much. Asking further is useless!”

he said tremblingly.

Kai didn’t speak, but simply took out a larger cloth bag and placed it on the ground.

The bag was slightly open, revealing at least five hundred high-grade Yuan Crystals, along with several bottles of excellent healing and cultivation pills.

The young cultivator’s eyes widened, and his breathing quickened.

“We’re not here to make things difficult for you,”

Kai’s voice was calm, yet carried an undeniable power. “We’re looking for forces within Jade Immortal City that are secretly resisting the Divine Race and the oppression of the Jade Immortal Palace.”

“Since you’ve been mingling here, making a living by selling information, you must have connections,”

the young cultivator said, his eyes struggling. He glanced at the Yuan Crystals, then at Kai’s deep, sharp eyes.

Then he licked his dry, cracked lips: “Senior… this kind of thing, if handled poorly, could really cost you your head, and even your soul might be taken to the Fallen Soul Slope.”

“That’s why we sought them out,”

Ming Li interjected. “We have a common goal. These Yuan Crystals and pills are your reward, and also a thank you for the referral. After the deed is done, there will be a greater reward.” A

generous reward will surely attract brave men.

The young cultivator gritted his teeth, grabbed the cloth bag and stuffed it into his robes, whispering, “Follow me, don’t make a sound, and don’t look around.”

He led Kai and the other man through the maze-like alleyways, sometimes climbing over ruins, sometimes crawling into hidden tunnels.

After walking for a full half hour, they arrived at what appeared to be the courtyard of an abandoned wealthy family.

The houses here were tall, but most were dilapidated, overgrown with vines, and lifeless.

The young cultivator stopped in front of a courtyard with a half-broken door hanging on it, and rhythmically knocked on the door frame three long knocks and two short knocks.

After a while, the door creaked open a crack, and a pair of wary eyes looked out.

“Monkey, is that you? Who are they?”

A deep voice came from behind the door.

“Brother Leopard, they’re…the ones I found. They want to join us, and they’re tough guys.”

The young cultivator called Monkey lowered his voice, “They brought generous gifts and are genuinely interested in doing big things.”

There was a moment of silence inside, then the door slowly opened, and a burly man with a scar on his face stepped aside: “Come in, quickly.”

The courtyard was large, and surprisingly, it was a hidden world inside, quite well-maintained, with faint traces of array fluctuations, isolating the aura and sounds from the outside and outside.

A few cultivators were meditating or polishing their weapons in the corners, and they all cast scrutinizing glances when they saw someone enter.

The scarred man, Brother Leopard, led them through the front courtyard to a more secluded courtyard at the back. Standing in the courtyard was a tall woman dressed in a light blue outfit, her back to them, gazing at a clump of green bamboo.

She slowly turned, revealing a beautiful yet spirited and aloof face, her eyes sharp as an eagle's, her cultivation clearly at the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

"Boss, Monkey brought two people, saying they want to join us," Leopard Brother said respectfully.

The woman's gaze swept over Kai and Ming Li, lingering briefly on Kai.

Kai deliberately concealed his cultivation level, while Ming Li's fifth-rank Upper Immortal Realm cultivation wasn't completely hidden; this combination seemed somewhat peculiar.

"Who are you? Why are you looking for us?"

the woman asked, her voice cold.

The monkey hurriedly stepped forward, bowing and scraping, "Sister Lianxing, these two seniors want to inquire about the Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Clan, especially... especially about the matter at Fallen Soul Slope a while ago. They offered a very high price. I don't think they're spies, so..."

The woman called Lianxing interrupted the monkey with a cold glint in her eyes, "The matter at Fallen Soul Slope is something you can inquire about? Monkey, you're becoming more and more ignorant of etiquette."

The monkey trembled in fright.

Kai stepped forward and cupped his hands, saying, "Fellow Daoist, please don't blame him. I am Kai, and this is Ming Li. We inquired about Fallen Soul Slope because the two who were beheaded are likely my old acquaintances."

“This enmity is irreconcilable. There is no turning back for me with the Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Clan behind them. I heard there are like-minded people here, so I came to visit them. It’s not about spying, but about cooperation.”

Lianxing stared at Kai, seemingly trying to discern the truth from his eyes.

Kai’s gaze was calm, though he tried his best to conceal the deep sorrow and icy killing intent within him, a trace of which still escaped, causing Lianxing, who had experienced life-and-death battles, to feel a slight chill.

“Words are meaningless

,” Lianxing said indifferently. “Who knows if you’re just bait sent by the Jade Immortal Palace to lure us out? We’ve lost quite a few brothers lately.”

“We can swear an oath to the Heavenly Dao,” Mingli said.

“An oath to the Heavenly Dao?”

Lianxing’s lips curled into a mocking smile. “In the Azure Nether Immortal Continent, where the influence of the Divine Race is deepening, whether the Heavenly Dao is still as impartial as before is still unknown. Besides, there are loopholes in oaths.”

Kai frowned slightly: “Then how will you believe me, fellow Daoist?”

Lianxing turned and looked at the bamboo grove: “Come with me, let’s talk somewhere safe.”

She led the way into the bamboo forest. Kai and Mingli exchanged a glance and followed.

Monkey also wanted to follow, but was stopped by Leopard Brother’s gaze.

The bamboo forest appeared ordinary, but upon entering, Kai immediately felt the space slightly distorted, and the flow of spiritual energy became peculiar.

After walking about a dozen steps, Lian Xing's figure suddenly blurred and vanished into thin air!

At the same time, the surrounding bamboo swayed without wind, its leaves rustling, instantly becoming so dense that it blocked out the sun, as if transforming into a giant green cage.

A powerful binding force surged from all directions, and streaks of azure array patterns rose from the ground, like living vines, wrapping around Kai and Ming Li's feet. "Hmph, as expected, you harbor ulterior motives!"

Lianxing's voice echoed from all directions of the bamboo forest, carrying a cold mockery

. "You dare to spy with such paltry tricks? Today, I'll make sure you don't leave alive, a perfect opportunity to unleash my newly refined Thousand Bamboo Soul-Locking Array!" Mingli's ghostly aura surged, ready to resist.

Kai, however, raised his hand to stop him.

His expression was calm as he glanced at the shifting bamboo forest and the array patterns moving across the ground, shaking his head.

"The array is not bad, borrowing the spirit of natural bamboo and wood, fusing the three elements of illusion, confinement, and killing. The one who set it up is quite accomplished in wood-based array formations."

Kai's voice wasn't loud, yet it clearly penetrated the rustling of the bamboo leaves. "Unfortunately, while following the natural way, it has lost its true essence. Forcing change only creates stagnation."

As he spoke, he took a light step forward.

This step, seemingly casual, landed precisely on a weak node where several moving array patterns converged.

The moment his foot landed, there was no earth-shattering roar, only a soft “crack,” like glass shattering.

Centered on his foot, the swirling azure array patterns trembled violently, then, like a long snake stripped of its tendons, rapidly dimmed and disintegrated. The

wildly dancing green bamboo around them abruptly stopped, and the countless bamboo leaf illusions receded like a tide, revealing the bamboo forest’s original form.

Kai took another step, his figure seemingly piercing through an invisible curtain of water, already appearing on the other side of the bamboo forest.

Lian Xing was standing beside a thick purple bamboo stalk, her hands forming a hand seal, her face still showing astonishment and disbelief.

Her proud Thousand Bamboo Soul-Locking Array, which had once trapped and killed several Upper Immortal Realm cultivators, had been broken so easily, in a single step!

She hadn’t even seen how he had done it!

In that instant of astonishment, Kai’s figure appeared like a ghost, three feet in front of her.

There was no overwhelming aura, no dazzling magical light, just a simple gesture: fingers drawn together like a sword, pointing towards her brow.

Before the fingertip, space slightly collapsed, a wisp of chaotic gray light flickering, emanating a terrifying aura that froze her very soul.

Her protective aura was as fragile as paper before this fingertip; instinct told her that if this finger struck, she would surely die!

Lianxing's pupils constricted, her whole body turned ice-cold, and she didn't even have time to think of dodging or blocking!

The fingertip stopped steadily half an inch before her brow.

Kai withdrew his finger, stood with his hands behind his back, and calmly looked at her: "Now, can we talk properly?"

The bamboo forest was silent.

The killing formation and illusions from before seemed as if they had never occurred.

Only a bead of cold sweat on Lianxing's forehead and her slightly trembling fingers testified to the life-or-death terror of that instant.

Leopard Brother, Monkey, and the others rushed in from outside the formation, and upon seeing this scene, they all stood frozen in shock. Lianxing took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing the turmoil in her heart. When she looked at Kai again, her eyes were completely different, filled with shock, fear, and a glimmer of hope.

The person who could break the formation so easily, who could bring her such a death threat, could not possibly be a lackey of the Jade Immortal Mansion.

If the Jade Immortal Mansion had such a figure, they would have been uprooted long ago.

"Senior... your supernatural powers are astonishing. Lianxing was blind and has offended you greatly."

Lianxing cupped her hands, her tone becoming respectful. "Please come with me, let's... talk in detail."

She paused, looking at the dumbfounded monkey beside her, her eyes filled with complex emotions: "Monkey, you come too. This time... you've truly brought a remarkable person."

Upon hearing this, the monkey was first bewildered, then overjoyed, his gaze towards Kai filled with awe and excitement.

Kai nodded slightly, following Lianxing deeper into the bamboo forest towards a refined dwelling entirely constructed of green bamboo.

Lianxing led Kai and Mingli into the dwelling, the monkey cautiously following behind.

The room was simply furnished with only a few bamboo chairs and a bamboo table, but the spiritual energy inside was much richer and purer than outside, clearly indicating that a spirit-gathering array had been set up.

“Senior, please sit down.”

Lianxing gestured for Kai to take a seat, while she herself sat opposite him, her expression solemn.

Kai sat down and, without beating around the bush, asked directly, “Fellow Daoist Lianxing, what do you know about the male and female cultivators beheaded at Fallen Soul Slope? What were their crimes? And who carried out the execution?”

Lianxing sighed and shook her head, saying, “To be honest, senior, this matter is a closely guarded secret within Jade Immortal City. Although we have some channels, we’ve only managed to glean some superficial information.”

“Jade Immortal Prefecture publicly stated that these two were executed for breaking through the barrier without permission and leaving the Thirteenth Heaven to travel to the lower realm, thus violating the divine decree.”

“Traveling to the lower realm without permission?”

Kai frowned. “Are there any similar precedents? And why such a severe punishment?”

“That’s precisely what’s suspicious.”

A sharp glint flashed in Lianxing’s eyes. “It’s not that cultivators haven’t secretly traveled to the lower realm in the past; most were fined, imprisoned, or given minor punishments as a warning.”

“To be so openly executed, and in such a perilous place as Fallen Soul Slope, using a Soul Refining Array… this is unprecedented.”

“Therefore, we suspect that those two seniors were not merely guilty of crimes committed in the lower realms, but rather that they learned some secrets they shouldn’t have known, or perhaps they touched upon the fundamental interests of the Jade Immortal Palace, or even the divine race behind it, which led to their deaths, and even the possibility of their souls being refined to eliminate any future threats.”

Kai’s heart sank.

This matched his guess.

Senior Mu Sha was knowledgeable, and his wife was no ordinary cultivator. Their sudden return to the Thirteenth Heaven, and their appearance in the Azure Nether Immortal Continent where the divine race’s influence had infiltrated, might indeed indicate that they had discovered something.

“Do you know when they were captured? Where were they captured? Did they resist or leave any words?” Kai pressed. Lianxing shook her head again: “The exact time and place are unknown. All we know is that they suddenly appeared on the Jade Immortal Prefecture’s wanted list a month ago, accused of trespassing and spying on forbidden areas.”

“The capture seemed quick, without causing much of a stir.”

“There are rumors that they initially intended to infiltrate the vicinity of the City Lord’s Mansion, but for reasons unknown, they disappeared without a trace, reappearing at the execution ground at Fallen Soul Slope.”

“As for whether they left any words…”

She paused, “The execution ground has an isolation array; no sound can be heard from the outside. Our people were too far away at the time; they only saw the execution process, not what they said.”

Kai remained silent for a moment, suppressing the surging anger within him, and said in a deep voice: “Then, who gave the order? And who carried it out?”

Lianxing’s expression turned solemn: “The one who gave the order is most likely the current City Lord of Jade Immortal City, the Lord of Jade Immortal Prefecture, Yu Wuji.”

“He is one of the representatives of the Divine Race here, his cultivation is unfathomable, at least a seventh-grade Upper Immortal, and he wields considerable power.”

“Such severe punishments must be ordered by him personally, or at least approved by him.”

“As for the specific executor…”

Lianxing glanced at Brother Leopard beside her, who immediately stepped forward and whispered, “We’ve inquired from various sources and confirmed that the one who led the people to Fallen Soul Slope to supervise the execution and preside over the Soul Refining Array that day was Fei Qing, the chief steward of the City Lord’s Mansion.”

“This man is Yu Wuji’s confidant, with a cultivation level of around the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm. He is skilled in array formations and penal law, and is ruthless and vicious.”

“And the ones who actually carried out the beheadings were two senior executioners from the City Lord’s Mansion’s Execution Hall, brothers named Tu Gang and Tu Meng. Both are fourth-rank Upper Immortal Realm body cultivators, specializing in executions, and their methods are cruel.”

“Tu Gang, Tu Meng…”

Kai slowly uttered these two names, his eyes icy cold without a trace of warmth, “Where are they now?”

Lianxing sensed the almost tangible killing intent emanating from Kai and her heart skipped a beat.

However, he still replied, “These two usually live in the executioner’s quarters on the west side of the City Lord’s Mansion, taking turns on duty. Today… according to our observation, Tu Meng should be on duty, while Tu Gang is off duty.”

“Tu Gang is addicted to drinking and gambling. On his days off, he often goes to the Drunken Immortal Pavilion in the West District to drink, and then goes to Qianjin Fang to gamble a few rounds. It’s getting late now, so he’s likely at the Drunken Immortal Pavilion.”

Kai stood up and cupped his hands to Lian Xing, saying, “Thank you for informing me, fellow Daoist. This information is crucial to us.”

Lian Xing quickly returned the courtesy, “Senior is too kind. The Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Race have been oppressing us for a long time. Senior’s cultivation

is extraordinary; if you can shake them, it would be our good fortune.”
“However… although Tu Gang is an executioner, he is still a member of the Jade Immortal Mansion. If he makes a move within the city, it will likely immediately attract the patrols and the City Lord’s Mansion’s experts. Senior must be cautious.”

“I know what I’m doing.”

Kai’s tone was calm, yet contained an undeniable determination. “Ming Li, you stay here with Fellow Daoist Lian Xing and continue to gather more detailed information, especially regarding Yu Wuji and Fei Qing’s movements, preferences, and weaknesses. Monkey…”

The monkey straightened up, startled. “Senior, please give your orders!”

“Take me to Zui Xian Lou. Identify Tu Gang.”

Kai glanced at him. “Afterwards, there will be a reward, and I can also arrange for you to temporarily leave this dangerous place.”

A struggle flashed across the monkey’s face, but thinking of the bag of high-grade Yuan Crystals and Kai’s unfathomable cultivation, he steeled his heart. “Yes! This junior will lead the way! I’ll recognize Tu Gang even if he’s turned to ashes!”

Kai nodded and said to Lian Xing, “Don’t spread today’s events. We’ll discuss the follow-up when I return.” Having said that, he said no more, signaling the monkey to lead the way, and his figure disappeared into the deepening night.

Lianxing stared at the direction Kai had disappeared in for a long time before softly saying to Mingli, “Senior Mingli, what exactly is Senior Chen’s cultivation level? Just now, with a single finger strike to break the formation, I couldn’t muster the slightest power to resist.”

Mingli’s gaze was deep, and he slowly said, “Mr. Chen’s cultivation level is beyond our comprehension. You only need to know that Jade Immortal Mansion… has probably really kicked a hornet’s nest this time.”

…

Drunken Immortal Pavilion was the largest restaurant in the West District, brightly lit and bustling with noise.

Cultivators, merchants, and even some prominent rogue cultivators gathered here, creating a distorted kind of prosperity amidst the clamor.

The monkey, familiar with the place, led Kai to a shadowy spot opposite the restaurant, pointing to a bald, burly man on the second floor by the

window, drinking heavily, shirtless, revealing muscular physiques and several hideous scars.

“Senior, that’s Tu Gang. He has a scar on his right eyebrow, making him easy to recognize,”

the monkey whispered, his voice trembling slightly.

Kai looked up.

Tu Gang was burly, his face full of scars, playing drinking games and drinking wildly with several equally imposing companions. His voice was booming, and his behavior was savage.

He made no attempt to conceal his cultivation level as a fourth-grade Upper Immortal, exuding a murderous aura.

Was this the man who had personally beheaded Senior Mu Sha?

Kai’s eyes were calm and unwavering, but his aura seemed to blend completely with the surrounding shadows. Even the monkey, standing close by, couldn’t sense his presence, only feeling a strange chill.

“Go back and find Ming Li. The rest is none of your business,” Kai said to the monkey.

The monkey, as if granted a pardon, nodded hurriedly and silently retreated into the darkness.

Kai didn’t act immediately. He simply stood quietly in the shadows, like the most patient hunter, watching the noisy window on the second floor.

Time passed slowly.

As the moon hung high in the sky, Tu Gang, seemingly having had his fill of drinking, staggered to his feet, exchanged a few jests with his companions, and went downstairs alone. He

then headed towards a relatively secluded alley, apparently on his way to the next casino.

Kai moved.

Like a wisp of smoke in the darkness, he silently followed.

The alley deepened, the light dim, with only a few distant lights.

Tu Gang hummed a vulgar tune, completely unaware of death's approach.

Just as he reached the middle of the alley, at a corner piled with clutter, the shadow before him suddenly came alive.

Without any warning, a slender hand seemed to reach out from nowhere, gripping his throat. Tu Gang's drunkenness instantly turned into cold sweat!

His eyes widened, and the surging Yuan energy within him was about to erupt when he was horrified to discover that an indescribable power, seemingly capable of annihilating everything, surged into his body from that palm, binding all his meridians, dantian, and even his soul!

He couldn't move a single finger, and could only stare in terror at the figure slowly emerging from the shadows.

It was a young, calm-looking man, but his eyes were like an icy pool, coldly staring at him.

"You…who are you…"

Tu Gang managed to squeeze out a few words.

Kai didn't answer, but instead leaned close to his ear and calmly asked in a voice only the two of them could hear:

“A month ago, at Fallen Soul Slope, were you the one who attacked that man and woman?”

Tu Gang froze, disbelief and a deeper fear flashing in his eyes.

The other party had come for that matter!

And so directly, so…terrifying!

He wanted to deny it, but under the gaze of those dual pupils, he didn’t even have the courage to lie, and could only nod with difficulty.

“Who gave the order? Yu Wuji? Or Fei Qing?”

Kai continued, his voice flat.

“It was…it was Steward Fei…bearing the city lord’s order…to order us brothers…to carry out the execution…”

Tu Gang felt like he was suffocating.

“Did they say anything before they died?” Kai’s fingers tightened slightly.

“No…no…the formation blocked them…they seemed…very angry…glaring at Steward Fei…”

Tu Gang felt his soul being frozen and cracked by that icy power. “I…I was just following orders…spare…”

Before he could utter the word “spare,”

crack .

A faint, almost inaudible cracking sound.

The light in Tu Gang’s eyes instantly froze and dimmed.

All his vitality, along with his soul, was completely annihilated by the surging chaotic power, leaving no trace.

Kai released his grip, and Tu Gang's burly body slumped to the ground like mud. Then, under the erosion of the chaotic power, it quickly turned into ashes, leaving not even his clothes behind, completely dissipating in the night wind.

The alley remained silent, as if nothing had happened.

A fourth-grade Immortal Realm cultivator was, in Kai's eyes, as easy as slaughtering a dog...

Kai stood still, the night enveloping his calm face.

The first one.

He raised his head, looking towards the City Lord's Mansion, brightly lit, symbolizing the supreme power of Jade Immortal City.

Kai's gaze pierced the night, locking onto the relatively independent, heavily guarded complex of buildings to the west of the City Lord's Mansion—the Executioner's Quarters.

The lights there were noticeably sparser, exuding a cold and murderous aura.

According to Lian Xing's intelligence, the one on duty now should be Tu Gang's elder brother, Tu Meng.

Killing Tu Gang was only the beginning.

Tu Meng, too, had to die. Neither of these executioner brothers, stained with the blood of their predecessors, Musa and his wife, will escape.

His figure once again merged into the darkness, moving like a ghost through the rooftops and alleys of Jade Immortal City. His speed was

extreme, yet he caused no fluctuation of spiritual energy, not even a ripple in the wind.

His control over his own power had reached a state of perfection.

The closer one got to the core area of the City Lord's Mansion, the tighter the security became.

On the surface, squads of Jade Immortal Mansion guards, clad in blue Daoist robes and exuding a powerful aura, patrolled along fixed routes.

In the shadows, numerous hidden detection barriers and warning arrays, like a dense spiderweb, covered the area.

However, in Kai's eyes, these were not impenetrable.

His divine sense, like invisible mercury, spread out silently, precisely avoiding the conventional detection points and penetrating the subtle gaps in the array's operation.

The characteristics of chaotic power allowed him to perceive and manipulate energy to an unbelievable degree.

What he saw was not merely the external form of the formation, but also the flow of its energy and the nodes where laws intertwined.

The Executioner's Abode was located inside the west wall of the City Lord's Mansion, separated from the core inner area by several courtyards and gardens. It was considered a relatively peripheral functional area, but its defenses were still formidable.

A pale blue light membrane enveloped the abode, a basic protective and alert barrier capable of withstanding attacks of a certain intensity and sensing unauthorized intruders.

Kai stopped in the shadow of a rockery several dozen feet away from the barrier.

He didn’t rashly touch the barrier, but observed it carefully.

The energy flow of the barrier followed a fixed pattern, fluctuating like breathing.

At the moment of each “breath,” there was an extremely brief energy “blind spot,” an unavoidable momentary delay during the formation’s self-adjustment.

This blind spot was so subtle as to be almost imperceptible, lasting less than one-hundredth of a breath; ordinary cultivators’ divine sense couldn’t detect it, let alone utilize it.

But Kai could.

He silently calculated the frequency of the barrier’s energy fluctuations, patiently waiting.

A night breeze rustled through the garden, and a patrol of guards passed by in the distance, their footsteps fading into the distance.

Now!

In that one-in-a-billionth of a second, as the barrier’s energy surged to its peak and was about to dip, Kai moved.

Without afterimage, without a sound of air being torn apart, he seemed to transform into a wisp of smoke, passing through that fleeting “gap” with perfect precision and entering the barrier’s interior.

Throughout the entire process, the barrier’s light membrane didn’t even ripple.

Entering the courtyard, the oppressive feeling intensified.

A faint stench of blood and a malevolent aura formed from long-term immersion in slaughter permeated the air.

The courtyard's architectural style was rugged and cold, primarily constructed of black stone, clashing sharply with the celestial atmosphere of the other areas of the Jade Immortal Mansion.

Kai's divine sense cautiously extended like tentacles.

The courtyard occupied a considerable area, with dozens of independent courtyards, most of which were dark, with only a few courtyards illuminated.

The centrally located "guard room" was brightly lit, with two guards of considerable strength standing watch at the entrance.

Based on the rough layout provided by Lianxing and the aura sensing, Kai quickly located a relatively secluded courtyard near a corner, which was now faintly emanating the unique blood and qi fluctuations of a fourth-grade body cultivator of the Upper Immortal Realm.

That blood and qi carried the same aura as Tu Gang, but it was more condensed and ferocious; it should be Tu Meng. As expected, a separate warning array was also set up around the courtyard, even more sophisticated than the outer perimeter barrier.

The array connected to several key nodes within the courtyard; once triggered, it could not only issue an alarm but also launch an attack or trap the enemy.

Kai held his breath, his gaze falling on several inconspicuous rune imprints on the ground and walls at the courtyard entrance.

This was a composite "Earthbound Spirit Net Array," combining sensing, binding, and earth spike attacks.

The array's core should be underground in the center of the courtyard.

Forcing its way in or violently breaking through would inevitably alert those inside, and might even affect the entire dormitory.

Kai once again demonstrated his astonishing mastery of array formations.

He extended his right index finger, a point of chaotic gray light condensing at its tip, extremely subtle, almost imperceptible.

He pointed it in the air, and the gray light transformed into several threads thinner than a hair, silently disappearing into the key rune nodes on the ground.

The power of chaos, the source of all laws, could also assimilate and annihilate all laws.

The wispy, chaotic energy precisely cut into the energy flow channels of the formation, without damaging its structure, but rather performing an operation that was almost “paralyzing” and “misleading.”

It temporarily severed the formation’s “perception” of external intrusions and created several tiny, self-circulating “dead ends” within its internal energy cycle.

The entire process was silent, like the most skilled physician performing the most delicate surgery.

After only three breaths, the formation at the courtyard entrance was still operating, its light flickering, but under Kai’s manipulation, it had become blind and deaf, oblivious to everything that was about to happen.

Kai’s figure flickered, drifting over the courtyard wall like a wisp of smoke and landing in the courtyard.

The courtyard was small, with three black stone houses in the center. To the left was a stone platform for cultivation, and to the right was a small weapon rack, hanging several heavy ghost-headed swords and chains, the air thick with the stench of blood.

Dim light streamed through the main room's window, illuminating a burly figure seated cross-legged on a futon, seemingly meditating. His breathing, however, was slightly erratic, and his brow was furrowed.

It was Tu Meng.

His face bore a striking resemblance to Tu Gang, but was more somber, a deep scar on his left cheek making him appear particularly menacing.

At this moment, his chest heaved slightly, a bead of sweat on his forehead, his mind uneasy.

Just moments before, while circulating his internal energy, Tu Meng's heart had inexplicably pounded violently, an indescribable chill instantly running down his spine, as if he were being watched by some extremely dangerous being.

The feeling came and went quickly, but it prevented him from entering a meditative state.

He and Tu Gang were twin brothers; though not perfectly aligned, they shared a subtle connection.

Now, he felt a vague sense of unease and emptiness, as if he had lost some important link.

"What's going on?"

Tu Meng opened his eyes, a fierce glint in them, filled with doubt and wariness. "Could it be that kid A-Gang has gotten into trouble again? Or..."

He recalled the execution at Fallen Soul Slope a month ago, the hateful and defiant eyes of the man and woman before their deaths, especially the man. Despite his cultivation being suppressed, his gaze seemed to see right through people, giving him nightmares afterward.

He shook his head, trying to dispel the unease: “Hmph, two ignorant fools. Even their souls were refined after death. What could they possibly do? They must have been too hasty in their cultivation lately.”

Although he comforted himself with this thought, he still decided to go out and patrol, and check the security situation at the inn tonight.

He got up, walked to the door, and prepared to push it open.

Just as his hand was about to touch the door… A sudden change occurred!

A barely perceptible ripple spread through the space behind him, like an invisible pebble dropped into a calm lake.

A figure seemed to step directly out of the void, abruptly appearing within three feet of him!

There was no killing intent, no wind, not even a change in temperature. It wasn’t

until that hand, as gentle as a lover’s caress, touched his vital point on the back of his heart that Tu Meng was startled to realize what was happening!

“Who?!”

His soul nearly left his body; his muscles instantly tensed like iron, his protective aura surging instinctively, and he lunged forward, opening his mouth to shout and alert the guards outside.

However, it was all too late.

The hand on his back suddenly emitted an indescribable, terrifying suction force and destructive energy!

It wasn't ordinary spiritual power, nor was it chilling ghostly energy or blazing true fire; it was a chaotic void that seemed to devour, decompose, and annihilate all things in heaven and earth!

His powerful protective aura, before this force, was as fragile as ice and snow under the sun, instantly melting and disintegrating.

That force penetrated his body, rupturing and disintegrating his meridians inch by inch.

His dantian, like a punctured balloon, saw his accumulated vital energy, cultivated over hundreds of years, dissipate wildly, only to be mercilessly devoured by the chaotic power.

Even more terrifying, this force rushed straight into his sea of consciousness, firmly imprisoning his terrified soul, which was just about to coalesce to attempt self-destruction or transmit a message.

Then, like a millstone, it slowly crushed and disintegrated him!

"Ugh... Heh heh..."

Tu Meng's eyes bulged, bloodshot, his mouth wide open, but he could only utter hoarse, leaky hoarse sounds, unable to utter a single word.

He felt his consciousness being dragged into boundless darkness and nothingness, all his power, all his senses, rapidly leaving him.

He wanted to turn around, to see who was killing him, but his neck was stiff, unable to even turn an inch.

Through his blurred vision, he only saw the outline of a long, steady hand, seemingly containing the ultimate truths of heaven and earth.

A voice, calm to the bone, seemed to resound directly from the depths of his soul:

"Sending you down to join your brother."

Brother?

A-Gang?

A final flicker of extreme fear and disbelief flashed in Tu Meng's eyes before his consciousness completely sank.

*Poof!

* A muffled sound, like a bag full of sand bursting open.

Tu Meng's burly body, starting from the inside out, rapidly turned into a cloud of gray-black dust, falling away like weathered rock.

Even his clothes and storage ring were eroded by the chaotic power, vanishing completely into the air.

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Kai withdrew his hand, a fleeting, chaotic gray light flashing in his palm.

He stood silently, his divine sense scanning the entire courtyard like the most sophisticated radar, confirming that no trace had been left behind, nor any residual warning mechanisms had been triggered.

The entire process, from his appearance to the kill, and then to the destruction of the body, took only two breaths.

Fast, accurate, ruthless, and silent.

He walked to the window and listened intently to the sounds outside.

The courtyard remained quiet, with only the faint sounds of conversation coming from the distant guardhouse and the footsteps of patrolling guards further away.

The commotion had been completely contained within the small room, without any leaks.

Kai did not leave immediately.

His gaze fell on the futon where Tu Meng had been sitting cross-legged. There was a small hidden compartment covered by an inconspicuous stone slab with simple restrictions.

He waved his hand, breaking the restrictions and lifting the stone slab. Inside were several jade slips, some Yuan Crystals, and a jet-black token. The front of the token was engraved with a ferocious character “刑” (Xing), and the back with the words “屠猛” (Tu Meng).

Kai picked up the jade slips and probed them with his divine sense.

One of them was a jade slip recording execution missions. Kai quickly browsed through it, his gaze soon locking onto a record:

“Date: 9763rd year of the Xuan Yin calendar, 17th day of the Frost Moon.”

“Location: Fallen Soul Slope. Executed persons: Mu Sha (male), Liu Qingyin (female). Crime: Departure from the Heavenly Palace, spying on forbidden areas.”

“Supervisor: Fei Qing, Grand Steward of the Inner Palace. Executioners: Tu Gang, Tu Meng. Remarks: ‘Soul Refining Crystal’ (number: Jiaxu 73) activated, soul collection completed, handed over to Grand Steward Fei.”

The format of the record was cold and concise, yet it was like a series of poisoned knives, stabbing deeply into Kai’s heart.

Senior Mu Sha, Senior Liu Qingyin… their names were recorded on the executioner’s mission list.

Kai’s fingers, gripping the jade slip, turned slightly white, but he forcibly controlled his emotions.

He continued to examine the other jade slips, which mostly contained the rules and regulations of the execution hall and fragments of body-refining techniques, of little value.

Finally, his gaze fell upon the token bearing the character “刑” (punishment).

This token was made of a special material, subtly connected to certain formations within the Executioner’s Abode and even the entire Jade Immortal Mansion’s Execution Hall. Perhaps it served as identification, or perhaps it had other uses.

After a moment’s thought, Kai put away the token and the jade slip recording the executions, returning everything else to its original state and restoring the hidden compartment.

Having done all this, he silently passed through the paralyzed security formation, just as he had come, and floated out of the courtyard.

Then, he found the energy conversion gap in the outer barrier again, easily escaping the Executioner’s Abode’s area.

From beginning to end, the Jade Immortal Mansion’s layers of defense were utterly ineffective.

…

When Kai’s figure reappeared at the bamboo grove where Lianxing and the others were, only half an hour had passed since he left.

Inside the grove, Lianxing, Mingli, Leopard Brother, and the anxiously waiting Monkey were all present.

The atmosphere was somewhat heavy; everyone was speculating about the outcome of Kai’s departure.

Seeing Kai return unharmed, without even a trace of blood on him, and with his expression still calm, Lianxing and the others were first stunned, then filled with surprise and doubt.

“Senior, you…” Lianxing hesitated before speaking.

Kai didn’t say much, but simply placed the jet-black “Punishment” token and the recording jade slip on the bamboo table. Upon seeing the token, Leopard gasped, “This is… the exclusive identity token of an executioner in the Execution Hall! Only senior executioners like Tu Gang and Tu Meng possess it!”

Lianxing quickly picked up the jade slip and probed it with her divine sense.

A moment later, her expression changed, and she looked up at Kai, her eyes filled with shock, “This… this is Tu Meng’s execution record? Senior, you…”

“Tu Gang is dead, in the alley outside Zuixianlou.”

Kai’s voice was calm and even, as if he were talking about a trivial matter, “Tu Meng is also dead, in his residence at the Executioner’s Lodge.”

Boom!

Despite having a premonition, hearing Kai say these two pieces of information so casually sent chills down everyone’s spine in the abode, including Ming Li, and their hearts pounded wildly!

Killed!

Really killed!

And in such a short time!

Outside Zuixianlou was one thing, but the Executioner’s Lodge was inside the City Lord’s Mansion!

Heavily guarded, with numerous arrays!

How did he get in?

How did he find the person?

How did he kill him?

How did he get out?

Especially Lianxing, she knew the security level inside the Jade Immortal Mansion.

Even for her, using all her hidden agents and meticulously planning, to silently kill a senior executioner like Tu Meng in the Executioner's Abode was almost an impossible task.

It would inevitably come at a huge cost, and it would be difficult to avoid alerting the guards.

But this Senior Chen before her, alone, made a round trip in less than an hour, not only killing two people but also bringing back crucial evidence, and… he looked as relaxed as if he had just taken a stroll!

The monkey's legs went weak, and he looked at Kai with the eyes of someone looking up to a god, filled with boundless fear.

He finally realized just how terrifying a being he had brought with him.

Although Mingli had some estimate of Kai's strength, he was also shaken at this moment.

He realized that he might have underestimated his master.

This method of infiltrating the enemy's lair, accurately beheading, and coming and going freely had exceeded the scope of ordinary combat, and was more like an art, a composure displayed after mastering power to the extreme.

“Senior…Senior’s divine might!”

Leopard Brother’s voice was hoarse, filled with utmost reverence as he bowed.

Lianxing took a few deep breaths, forcibly suppressing the turmoil in her heart, and carefully placed the jade slip down.

Then she solemnly said, “Senior’s cultivation is profound and your methods are unfathomable. Lianxing admires you to the point of prostration. With this as evidence, the injustice done to Senior Mu Sha and his wife is even more irrefutable. However…”

Her face showed worry, “The sudden death of the Tu brothers will not be easily forgiven by the Jade Immortal Mansion, especially Fei Qing, who, as the supervising officer and Yu Wuji’s confidant, will definitely investigate thoroughly. We need to make plans as soon as possible.”

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Kai nodded, his gaze falling on the token and jade slip on the bamboo table: “They couldn’t find any trace. Next, the target is Fei Qing.”

Lianxing’s heart tightened: “Fei Qing?”

“Senior, Fei Qing is different from the Tu brothers. He holds the position of Grand Steward of the Inner Palace, residing year-round in the core area of the City Lord’s Mansion, heavily guarded.” ”

His own cultivation has reached the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, and he is proficient in formations and restrictions. He is cunning and suspicious, extremely difficult to deal with. To replicate this method, I’m afraid…”

“Precisely because he is proficient in formations, he may know more.”

Kai interrupted her, his eyes deep, “He may know the exact cause of the deaths of Senior Mu Sha and his wife, and what secrets the Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Clan are hiding. Capturing him and getting the truth out of him is more important than killing him.”

Capture?

Lianxing and the others were shocked again. Capture the Grand Steward of the Inner Palace in the core area of the Jade Immortal Mansion?

This is more than ten times more difficult than assassinating an executioner!

“Mr. Chen, this matter is of utmost importance and requires careful consideration,”

Ming Li advised. “We need to thoroughly investigate Fei Qing’s whereabouts, habits, and the strength of his guards.”

“Moreover, once we take action, regardless of success or failure, it will inevitably alarm Yu Wuji and the entire Jade Immortal Mansion, and may even attract the direct attention of the Divine Race.”

Kai understood the risks involved.

However, his anger and obsession with uncovering the truth made him unwilling to wait any longer.

Every moment he waited meant that the souls of Senior Mu Sha and his wife would suffer more within the Soul Refining Array, and the enemy might also realize that the deaths of the Tu brothers were not accidental.

“Fellow Daoist Lianxing, you have been operating here for many years and have the deepest understanding of the Jade Immortal Mansion,”

Kai said, looking at Lianxing. “I need to know the time and place where Fei Qing is most likely to leave the core area of the City Lord’s Mansion

within the next three days, as well as the usual guard configuration around him. The more detailed the better."

Seeing that Kai had made up his mind, Lianxing knew that persuasion was useless, and the strength Kai had displayed gave her a glimmer of hope.

She pondered for a moment, then said, "Fei Qing is an extremely cautious man. He rarely leaves the inner palace except for necessary official business."

"However, he has a habit: every five days, at midnight, he goes to the 'Spirit Gathering Pool,' located at the border of the inner and outer palaces, to cultivate alone for an hour."

"It is said that there is a cold spring at the bottom of the Spirit Gathering Pool, which is greatly beneficial to his cultivation of the 'Profound Yin Ice Condensation Technique.' This matter is extremely secretive; we only discovered it by chance after sacrificing one of our brothers. His next cultivation session will be tomorrow night at midnight."

"Spirit Gathering Pool? Where is it? How is it guarded?" Kai's eyes flashed.

"The Spirit Gathering Pool is located deep within the Hundred Gardens of the Inner Palace, in a secluded spot, but it's shrouded by an array."

"Each time Fei Qing goes there, he only brings two personal guards, both trusted assassins of the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm."

"When he cultivates, the guards stand watch outside the array at the pool's edge,"

Lianxing quickly explained. "This is the only known opportunity for Fei Qing to regularly leave the core area. But even so, the Spirit Gathering Pool is still within the Inner Palace's territory; if something happens, the Inner Palace's experts will arrive instantly."

Tomorrow at midnight… the Spirit Gathering Pool…

Kai quickly weighed the options in his mind.

This was indeed an opportunity, although extremely risky.

Making a move in an environment the opponent was familiar with and prepared for would involve too many variables. ”Besides this, does he have any other weaknesses? For example, his family, hobbies, or… any conflicts with Yu Wuji or other forces?”

Kai pressed, searching for a possible breakthrough in his psychological defenses.

Lianxing pondered, “Fei Qing was promoted by Yu Wuji from humble beginnings and is extremely loyal to him. It is said that he has no family. This man is greedy and extremely obsessed with improving his cultivation, which is why he goes to the Spirit Gathering Pool regularly.”

“As for his relationships with others… the Jade Immortal Mansion is not a monolithic entity. Fei Qing, relying on Yu Wuji’s favor, controls internal affairs and has offended many people, especially some elders and stewards in the outer mansion. But we cannot delve into the specifics of these conflicts.”

Greedy, obsessed with cultivation…

thoughts raced through Kai’s mind.

Perhaps, a two-pronged approach could be taken.

“Fellow Daoist Lianxing, could you find a way to convey the news that the Tu brothers are dead, and that it might be revenge from enemies, to Fei Qing in a way that won’t directly implicate you?”

“Ideally, it should make him feel uneasy, even suspecting that someone within the mansion who has a grudge against him is behind it all,” Kai said slowly.

Lianxing's eyes lit up: "Senior, are you trying to disturb his mind, make him suspicious, and perhaps cause him to do something irrational, or... strengthen the defenses around him?"

"Strengthening defenses is inevitable. But once suspicion arises, he might rely more on the power he trusts most, or... want to go to a place he considers safe to confirm some things."

Kai's gaze was profound. "For example, to check if the Soul Refining Crystals he's in charge of are safe."

Lianxing and the others were shocked upon hearing this.

Soul Refining Crystals!

Those are the core items involved in the Soul Refining Array at Fallen Soul Slope!

"Mr. Chen wants to..." Mingli seemed to understand Kai's plan.

"If he goes to check the location of the Soul Refining Crystals himself because of his suspicion... that might be a better opportunity for us."

Kai's voice turned cold. "Compared to taking action in his cultivation lair, a temporary place, perhaps less heavily guarded, is more suitable for a proper talk with him."

Lianxing felt a chill run down her spine.

This Senior Chen was not only terrifyingly strong, but his mind was also frighteningly meticulous and profound.

He was trying to lure the enemy out, and he was going to strike at their most vulnerable and vulnerable point!

"I understand,"

Lianxing nodded solemnly. “We will try to spread the news through several unreliable channels to create some chaos and speculation.”

“But Fei Qing is naturally suspicious, so it’s still uncertain whether we can provoke him.”

“Just do our best.” After Kai finished speaking, he looked at Mingli and said, “Mingli, you assist Fellow Daoist Lianxing. Monkey, Leopard, you two strengthen the observation of the outer perimeter of Jade Immortal Mansion, especially the places where important supplies might be stored.”

“I need to know all of Fei Qing’s unusual movements during the day tomorrow.”

“Yes!” Everyone responded in unison, and without realizing it, they had completely submitted to Kai as their leader.

Chapter 5998

As

dawn broke, the faint light pierced the misty spiritual energy above Jade Immortal City, yet it could not dispel the suddenly heavy atmosphere within the city.

Inside the Jade Immortal Palace, in the duty room of the Executioners’ quarters, the atmosphere was even more oppressive, like solidified ice.

Four executioners, their faces pale and their foreheads dripping with cold sweat, stood

with their heads bowed, not daring to even breathe. At the head of the table, behind a large desk carved from a single piece of obsidian, sat a middle-aged man with a somber expression.

He wore a dark blue brocade robe embroidered with intricate cloud patterns, his face lean, with three long wisps of beard, giving him a scholarly air.

However, his narrow eyes flashed with a chilling light, and he exuded an aura of authority and suppressed murderous intent.

This was Fei Qing, the Grand Steward of the Jade Immortal Palace.

“Two living people vanished right under your noses overnight?”

Fei Qing’s voice wasn’t loud, even somewhat calm, but to the four stewards, it was like an ice pick piercing their bones.

“Reporting…reporting to the Grand Steward.”

The leading steward mustered his courage, his voice trembling, “Last night…last night everything was normal. At midnight, the shift change was clear; the duty records were clear. Tu Meng was on duty and didn’t leave the dormitory.” ”

Tu Gang…Tu Gang was off duty yesterday and, as usual, went to the Drunken Immortal Pavilion, and hasn’t returned yet.”

“At the morning roll call, we found both of them missing. We immediately sent people to search—the dormitory, the Drunken Immortal Pavilion, Qianjinfang, and even several places they frequented—but…they were nowhere to be found.”

“We asked their colleagues, and no one heard anything unusual last night…”

“What about the dormitory’s formation? Was it triggered? Were there any signs of outsiders breaking in?” Fei Qing interrupted the steward’s report, his fingertips lightly tapping the obsidian tabletop, producing a crisp, rhythmic sound.

“The formation… the formation is functioning normally, with no trigger record.”

“We have carefully checked Tu Meng’s residence and the entire courtyard, both inside and outside, and found no signs of a struggle, nor any residual aura or fluctuations of magical power. Everything… everything is eerily normal.”

Another steward added, his face filled with disbelief.

“Eerily normal…” Fei Qing repeated the sentence, his narrow eyes slightly narrowed, the cold light intensifying.

“Two body cultivators at the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, especially Tu Meng, who was on duty, inside the courtyard, protected by the formation, just vanished without a sound? Without even a trace?”

Fei Qing stood up, slowly walked to the window, and looked at the gradually brightening sky outside, but his eyes became even more profound.

The Tu Gang and Tu Meng brothers were his trusted henchmen, specially promoted to handle shady matters, especially the Fallen Soul Slope incident some time ago… Now the two of them have disappeared at the same time, neither alive nor dead, this is definitely not unusual.

“Recently, has anyone been inquiring about… things they shouldn’t be inquiring about?” Fei Qing asked suddenly, his back to the stewards. The

stewards exchanged glances. One of them seemed to remember something and hesitated before saying, “Reporting to the Grand Steward, a few days ago… there seemed to be a rumor that someone in the Zhiwen Pavilion in the dark alleys of the West District was spending a lot of money to inquire about… about the Fallen Soul Slope.”

“Especially… about that male and female cultivators. But the old ghost of the Zhiwen Pavilion is tight-lipped, and our people haven’t been able to find out exactly who they are.”

“Falled Soul Slope… that male and female…” Fei Qing turned around, a barely perceptible shadow crossing his face. “Anything else?”

“Anything else…”

another steward whispered, “Yesterday afternoon, an informant from the Punishment Hall reported that there seemed to be an unfamiliar face loitering near the Drunken Immortal Pavilion, seemingly… seemingly inquiring about Tu Gang’s whereabouts. But at the time, we thought it was just a common revenge or debt dispute, and didn’t… didn’t take it too seriously.”

Bang!

Fei Qing slammed his palm on the obsidian table, smashing a chunk off the hard corner and reducing it to dust!

“Useless trash!”

he roared, his eyes blazing with murderous intent. “Someone has already tracked down the executioner! How dare you be so negligent?!” The four deacons fell to their knees in terror, kowtowing repeatedly: “Grand Steward, please calm your anger! We have failed in our duty! We deserve to die!”

Fei Qing’s chest heaved slightly as he suppressed his surging rage and a growing unease.

The disappearance of the Tu brothers, the inquiries about the Fallen Soul Slope incident and the executioner… the connection between these two events was too obvious!

Could it be… that old acquaintances of that man and woman had come knocking?

But according to intelligence, those two had no foothold in the Thirteenth Heaven. How could they possibly have mobilized such a

master of uncanny skill, capable of silently bypassing even the dormitory's array?

Or perhaps, when they infiltrated the vicinity of the City Lord's Mansion, they truly discovered something, and this involved more than just them?

Countless thoughts raced through Fei Qing's mind.

He knew Yu Wuji's temperament well, and he understood the consequences if anything entrusted to him by the Divine Clan went wrong.

The Fallen Soul Slope incident had to be kept secret; any glimmer of hope that might be revealed had to be nipped in the bud!

"Pass on my orders!"

Fei Qing's voice returned to its icy tone. "First, immediately seal off all information and declare that Tu Gang and Tu Meng have secretly left the city on official business. Anyone who dares to discuss or spread rumors in private will be punished severely for disrupting the affairs of the city!"

"Second, mobilize the entire Punishment Hall and the Inner Guard to secretly investigate all unfamiliar faces entering the city recently, especially those with unknown cultivation levels or suspicious movements." "

Focus on tracking down those two people who inquired about Fallen Soul Slope and the Tu brothers! Dig three feet into the ground to find them!"

"Third, strengthen the guards and array alert levels in all areas of the City Lord's Mansion, especially the Inner Palace, the warehouse, Fallen Soul Slope, and other key locations. Without my authorization, no one is allowed to approach!"

"Fourth, notify the deacons of the West District to immediately impose a citywide curfew. Only entry is permitted, no exit! Strictly check all city

gates and teleportation arrays. All those leaving the city must undergo rigorous questioning!”

A series of orders were issued, clear and decisive.

“Yes! We will obey the Grand Steward’s orders!” The four deacons, as if granted a pardon, quickly accepted the orders and left.

Fei Qing remained alone in the duty room, his expression shifting between anger and uncertainty.

He walked to the wall, opened a hidden compartment, revealing a row of neatly arranged jade boxes, each labeled.

His finger traced over several of the boxes, finally stopping at one labeled “Jiaxu 73.”

Inside were the “Soul Refining Crystals,” condensed from the soul fragments of Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin, collected from the Soul Refining Array at Fallen Soul Slope.

According to custom, Soul Refining Crystals of this level required periodic reinforcement and sealing with a special array, and were reported to the Divine Race.

“Could it be… that they really came for this?”

Fei Qing muttered to himself, his eyes flickering.

He instinctively wanted to immediately check if the Soul Refining Crystals were safe, but years of caution held him back.

The situation was unclear; if he rashly went to the secret vault where the Soul Refining Crystals were stored, he might be targeted…

He hesitated for a moment, then took out a specially made communication jade talisman, infused it with magic power, and whispered a few words.

A moment later, the jade talisman glowed faintly, transmitting a brief divine message.

Confirming that the secret vault formation was intact and there were no immediate abnormalities, Fei Qing breathed a slight sigh of relief, but his vigilance was at its peak.

He decided that he must see the manor lord, Yu Wuji, today to report this matter in person.

Chapter 5999

As the sun rose high in the

sky, the atmosphere within Jade Immortal City had drastically changed.

The previously relatively relaxed city gates and main streets were suddenly filled with a large number of Jade Immortal Palace guards, clad in blue armor and exuding a powerful aura.

They sealed off all the city gates, leaving only a side gate open for entry, and those who entered were subject to strict questioning and inspection.

The number of patrol teams within the city doubled, increasing from three-man teams to ten-man teams, with leaders at least at the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, their sharp eyes scanning every pedestrian on the street.

The teleportation array area was completely sealed off, and anyone attempting to leave using it was roughly stopped.

“What’s going on? What happened?”

“I don’t know! I heard something happened at the City Lord’s Mansion last night…”

“Shh! Keep your voice down! Didn’t you see the guards’ eyes? Don’t they want to live?”

“This kind of setup… we haven’t seen anything like it in hundreds of years, has it? Could some important figure be arriving? Or…”

The cultivators on the street discussed amongst themselves, but all kept their voices low, their faces filled with surprise and unease.

Jade Immortal City had been peaceful for far too long, and this sudden tension and martial law created an oppressive atmosphere, as if a storm was brewing.

Some well-informed or perceptive factions quickly restrained their disciples, closed their doors, and waited to see what would happen.

…

Inside the Bamboo Forest Abode, Kai, Ming Li, Lian Xing, and the others naturally noticed the changes within the city immediately.

“They’re moving so fast.”

Ming Li glanced through the bamboo grove at the noticeably increased number of patrolling guards on the distant streets, his brow furrowing slightly. “It seems the disappearance of the Tu brothers has already put Jade Immortal Prefecture on high alert. The entire city is under martial law, no entry, no exit—they’re checking us.”

Monkey’s face paled, and he nervously rubbed his hands. “Senior… what do we do now? The city gates and teleportation arrays are sealed off, how… how do we get out?”

Leopard’s expression was also grave. “Jade Immortal Prefecture’s reaction this time is probably not just because two executioners died. That old dog Fei Qing must have sensed something.”

Lian Xing looked at Kai, who had been resting with his eyes closed and his face calm, and said in a deep voice, “Senior, our intelligence has just delivered definite news. The investigation within Jade Immortal Prefecture has clearly pointed to the two unfamiliar faces who inquired about Fallen Soul Slope at Zhiwen Pavilion a few days ago.”

“They are currently conducting a secret city-wide search for anyone matching their description. Although we are well-hidden here, it’s probably not a place for us to stay for long.”

Kai slowly opened his eyes, his gaze deep and calm. “As expected. Fei Qing isn’t stupid. He must have connected the deaths of the Tu brothers to Senior Mu Sha’s matter. Martial law and a search are inevitable reactions.”

He paused, then looked at Lian Xing: “You said before that you had a way to muddy the waters, make Fei Qing suspicious, and perhaps even lure him away. How’s that going?”

Lian Xing’s spirits lifted, and she quickly replied: “Our people have already begun their operation. Through several intermediaries connected to the outer deacons of the Jade Immortal Palace, but who are not entirely reliable, they have spread several pieces of information, some true and some false.”

“Firstly, they implied that the Tu brothers were silenced because they knew certain shady details of transactions within the Jade Immortal Palace, especially those involving resource allocation and the handling of certain special materials.”

“Secondly, it implies that this matter may be related to several elders in the outer court who are dissatisfied with Fei Qing’s control over internal affairs. They secretly hired someone to retaliate, intending to cut off Fei Qing’s wings and undermine his prestige.”

“Thirdly, the most subtle point is that the stones at Fallen Soul Slope may not be sturdy, implying that there may be a problem with the Soul Refining Array or related items.”

“These messages are being spread very carefully, through roundabout channels, so they shouldn’t reach us in the short term.”

“But given Fei Qing’s suspicious nature and his emphasis on power, he will definitely not remain indifferent to these rumors.”

“Especially the last point, which involves the Soul Refining Crystal, his lifeline and his biggest source of insecurity.”

Kai nodded: “Well done. What Fei Qing fears most now is that the Fallen Soul Slope incident will be exposed and the Soul Refining Crystal will be compromised.”

“The rumors of internal strife will also make him hesitant to act rashly, not daring to use all his resources to investigate openly. Instead, he may rely more on his core confidants, or… personally confirm whether what he cares about most is safe.”

“Mr. Chen means he might take action today?” Ming Li asked.

“Martial law and searches are for external threats. Stabilizing the internal situation and confirming the safety of core secrets are what he needs to do more urgently right now.”

Kai’s gaze turned slightly cold. “Especially if he’s going to see Yu Wuji to report, then before that, he’ll likely go to a place…”

“The secret vault where the Soul Refining Crystals are stored!” Lian Xing interjected, a glint in her eyes. “That’s right.”

Kai stood up. “Fellow Daoist Lianxing, do you have any informants who can infiltrate the Inner Palace or get close to important areas without arousing suspicion?”

“They don’t need to do anything dangerous. They just need to observe from a distance whether Fei Qing will leave the core area of the Inner Palace this morning and head in a specific direction, especially west of the Hundred Gardens, near the treasury or a more remote corner.”

Lianxing quickly thought: “Yes! We have a brother who works as a handyman in the Inner Palace’s kitchen, responsible for transporting ingredients to some areas. He can take the opportunity to move around in some passages on the outer perimeter of the Inner Palace.”

“West of the Hundred Gardens… that area is close to the Cold Cellar and the Old Pill Room, and it is indeed quite remote. I will immediately arrange for him to keep an eye out near the passages in those directions.”

“Very good.” Kai looked at Mingli and Leopard Brother. “You two continue to monitor the movements of the search in the city and the other reactions of the Jade Immortal Palace’s higher-ups. Monkey, you stay here and don’t go out.”

“Senior, you mean…” Lianxing vaguely guessed Kai’s plan.

“If Fei Qing is truly troubled by the rumors and worried about the Soul Refining Crystal, and goes to the secret vault to check it himself…”

Kai’s voice was calm, yet carried a resolute determination, “that would be the best time for us to act. The chances are much greater on the secluded path leading to the secret vault than in the Spirit Gathering Pool shrouded by the array.”

“But senior, even if Fei Qing leaves the core area, he will surely have guards by his side, and the secret vault is definitely heavily guarded…” Brother Leopard said worriedly.

“It’s all up to us.”

Kai didn’t say much, but the unwavering confidence he exuded, as if everything was under his control, subtly infected everyone.

The waiting time became exceptionally long.

The air inside the hermitage seemed to freeze; everyone could hear their own heartbeats.

About an hour later, a rhythmic bird call came from outside the hermitage.

Lian Xing's expression shifted; she quickly walked out of the hermitage, returning a moment later with a suppressed excitement and tension on her face.

"Senior! We have news!"

She spoke quickly. "Our people saw that about 15 minutes ago, Fei Qing, accompanied by two bodyguards, left Qingxin Pavilion and headed towards the west side of the Hundred Gardens, behind the old alchemy room!"

"Further in that direction lies an abandoned courtyard and mountain wall that has been designated as a restricted area. We've always suspected there might be a hidden entrance or secret chamber there!"

Kai's eyes flashed. "He really went there. He only had two bodyguards with him?"

"Confirmed to be only two, both his trusted henchmen, with cultivation levels around the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm."

Lianxing confirmed. "Moreover, they moved very quickly, deliberately avoiding the main road and choosing secluded paths, their expressions wary."

"Good." Kai no longer hesitated. "Tell me the most likely point along that path, the most suitable spot to make a move."

Lianxing was prepared and immediately took out a simple but clearly marked map of the inner palace's outer perimeter, pointing to a narrow path winding between the artificial hill and the old garden.

"This place is called Listening Pine Path. It's lined with ancient pines and scattered rocks, the path is winding and the view is obstructed.

Moreover, because it's near an abandoned area, there are very few guards patrolling, and the intervals between patrols are long."

"It's one of the only routes they can take from Qingxin Pavilion to that restricted area, and also the most likely one."

Kai carefully examined the map, memorizing the route and environment.

"Ming Li, you come with me. Provide support around Listening Pine Path, guarding against any unexpected events and providing backup."

"Lian Xing, all of you, move immediately, leave this place, and go to the safe houses you prepared earlier. Don't act rashly without my message." Kai quickly issued the orders.

"Senior, please be careful! Fei Qing's cultivation is not weak, and he's as cunning as a fox; he must have ways to protect himself!" Lian Xing solemnly warned.

Kai nodded, said nothing more, exchanged a glance with Ming Li, and the two of them vanished silently from the hermitage, as if blending into the shadows under the sunlight.

The window of opportunity left for them was very short.

Before Fei Qing returns after inspecting the secret vault, the entire series of high-risk actions—interception, subjugation, interrogation, and then evacuation—must be completed on Ting Song Path.

Chapter 6000

The sunlight outside the hermitage was perfect, casting dappled shadows on the bamboo, but Kai and Ming Li seemed to blend into the gaps in the light and shadow, vanishing without a trace in an instant.

Lian Xing gazed in the direction they disappeared, silently praying.

Then she turned and solemnly said to Leopard Brother and Monkey, “Pack your things immediately and move to Safe House Number Two as instructed by the senior. Be quick and leave no trace.”

Kai and Ming Li moved at high speed through the complex streets and rooftops of Jade Immortal City like two invisible shadows.

They avoided all main roads and heavily patrolled areas, choosing instead quiet alleys, abandoned courtyards, and even underground drainage channels. Their movements were unpredictable, and their auras were concealed to the extreme.

As a member of the Ghost Clan, Ming Li was naturally skilled at concealment, and now he made his ghostly aura invisible, closely following behind Kai, once again marveling at Kai’s unfathomable stealth abilities.

About an incense stick later, the two silently approached the high wall on the west side of Jade Immortal Mansion.

This wasn’t the main entrance, so the guards were relatively weak, but faint defensive runes still flowed across the tall jade wall, and there were hidden sentries at intervals.

Kai didn’t choose to climb over the wall. He led Ming Li around to the base of a wall, where several ancient vines, their tendrils intertwined and covering almost half of the wall.

More importantly, Kai’s divine sense detected a long-abandoned, tiny pipe inside the wall, used to drain the residual spiritual spring water. Due to

years of neglect, most of its internal protective array had long since failed, and because it was so tiny and hidden, it hadn’t been covered by the routine maintenance array.

“Go in from here,”

Kai transmitted his voice, a flash of chaotic gray light appearing at his fingertips as he gently touched a brick hidden under the old vines.

The gray light penetrated, and several extremely faint “click” sounds came from inside the brick, as if an internal mechanism had been quietly opened.

Immediately afterward, a section of wall, about a foot square, silently caved in, revealing a dark opening just wide enough for one person to pass through sideways. A musty, damp smell wafted out.

Without hesitation, Kai slipped inside first, followed closely by Ming Li.

Once inside, Kai tapped a spot on the inside of the loose wall brick, and the opening silently returned to its original state, appearing identical to the surrounding walls from the outside.

Inside was a narrow, downward-sloping stone path covered in slippery moss, the air thick with a musty smell and a faint dampness.

The two descended several dozen feet along the path, where a fork in the road appeared.

Based on the markings on the Lianxing map and his own divine sense, Kai chose the left path—a deeper, more secluded passage, almost half-blocked by collapsed earth and rocks.

Like the most agile pangolins, they traversed the narrow, complex, and treacherous abandoned pipes and underground crevices.

In some places, the power of chaos was needed to subtly corrode the rusted iron fences blocking the way; in others, one had to carefully avoid fragments of ancient restrictions that still retained a faint trace of aggression.

Throughout the process, Kai demonstrated an astonishing insight and control over energy and structure, always finding the safest and fastest path.

Ming Li followed silently, his heart growing increasingly apprehensive.

This was far more than just superior strength; it required an immense wealth of experience and a frighteningly calm mind.

Just how many perilous situations had Kai endured to hone such abilities? About an incense stick's time later, a faint light and fresh air appeared ahead.

Kai stopped before an exit covered in weeds, his divine sense spreading outwards like flowing water.

Beyond the exit was a long-abandoned corner of a garden, the artificial hill crumbling, the pond dried up, and overgrown with weeds.

In the distance, the magnificent eaves of the Jade Immortal Mansion's inner palace could be seen, but this place had clearly been forgotten for a long time.

"We're already in the abandoned area outside the Hundred Flowers Garden,"

Kai transmitted his voice. "The Listening Pine Path is to the east. Go through this abandoned garden, then through a small bamboo grove. Fei Qingruo will have to take the Listening Pine Path when she comes from the Pure Heart Pavilion. Let's go there in advance to make arrangements."

The two floated out of the cave like ghosts, quickly disappearing into the shadows of the abandoned garden, and stealthily headed towards the Listening Pine Path.

The Listening Pine Path lived up to its name. A winding bluestone path was hidden among tall, dense ancient pine trees.

The pine trees were all as thick as several people could encircle, their age unknown, their branches strong and their needles like canopies, cutting

sunlight into fine dappled patterns that dappled the moss-covered stone slabs.

The path was flanked by jagged rocks, adding to its winding and concealed nature. The place was exceptionally quiet; apart from the rustling of the wind through the pines, almost no other sound could be heard, and no one could be seen.

Kai quickly scanned his surroundings, his eyes sharp as lightning.

He chose a hollow at a bend in the path, flanked by tall artificial rocks and several exceptionally thick ancient pines, offering numerous blind spots, and the intertwined branches above created a natural hiding space.

“Ming Li, you hide behind that boulder, concealing all your presence. Don’t act without my signal.”

“Your task is, in case of any unexpected events, such as patrolling guards passing by, or Fei Qing’s guards trying to sound the alarm, you must immediately and discreetly stop them, creating chaos or misleading them to buy us time.”

Kai quickly assigned the task.

“Understood.”

Ming Li nodded, his figure flickering as he vanished into the shadow of the boulder like a wisp of smoke, his presence disappearing without a trace, as if no one had ever been there.

Kai himself leaped up, silently climbing a perfectly positioned ancient pine tree and hiding behind its dense needles.

From this angle, he could clearly see the area of about ten feet before and after the bend in the path below, yet remain extremely difficult for anyone below to detect.

Next came the patient waiting, and… the silent preparation.

Kai stretched out his hands, his fingertips simultaneously glowing with a barely perceptible chaotic gray light.

He drew lines in the air, and countless extremely fine gray threads shot out from his fingertips, merging into the surrounding air, pine needles, cracks in the rocks, and the ground.

He was setting up an array.