the mans Decree: Kai Ping / Chen Ping

Chapter 6241 - 6250

Night fell, as if an ink-stained brocade had enveloped the world, with only a lone moon hanging in the sky, its cold, clear light casting a pale, almost ethereal glow over the desolate mountains.

The wind howled, and all was deathly silent.

Deep in the darkness, a dark mass of people hurried along the rugged mountain path, guided by the moonlight.

Leading them was a tall, imposing figure, yet utterly disheveled—none other than the once-powerful Temple Master, Shen Tong.

Behind him followed over two hundred of his remaining disciples, all ragged, haggard, with bloodshot eyes, their steps unsteady yet daring not to falter.

On their escape, they had deliberately chosen treacherous, rarely traveled paths, hiding by day and moving by night.

During the day, they hid in dark caves or deep within the jungle, afraid to light fires, subsisting only on dry rations and cold fruit; the slightest disturbance made them as easily startled as birds startled by a bow.

Shen Tong led the way, each step feeling as if weighed down by lead.

His face was grim, his muscles tense, and his once deep and sharp eyes were now filled only with weariness, humiliation, and despair.

The nightmare of the destroyed Holy Mountain constantly haunted his mind; Kai's cold face and the tragic scene of the Holy Mountain

collapsing and the Venerable One turning to ashes kept flashing before his eyes, and hatred and fear almost devoured him.

“Palace Master,”

Elder Zhou lowered his voice, warily scanning the surroundings, “a hundred miles ahead is the border of the Holy Domain of Light. Beyond this lies the Demon Domain, a forbidden zone for the righteous path. The pursuers should not dare to step into it.”

Shen Tong slowly nodded, his gaze fixed on the horizon.

There, the brilliant golden holy light abruptly ceased, replaced by a gray world and surging dark red demonic mist, like a lurking behemoth, exuding a ferocious aura.

The Demon Domain, the land inhabited by demons, where demonic energy soared and demonic beasts roamed freely, a place that righteous cultivators feared to mention.

Shen Tong felt a deep sorrow and humiliation in his heart, and gave a bitter laugh.

He, once a powerful True Immortal, wielding immense influence, was now like a stray dog, forced to abandon his dignity and flee to the despised Demon Realm for refuge.

But the temple was destroyed, his disciples suffered heavy casualties, and Kai’s power hung like a sword over his head. He had no choice but to seek refuge with the opposing demon race.

“Go,” Shen

Tong uttered through gritted teeth, quickening his pace and rushing towards the chilling demonic mist.

Though fearful, the disciples, for the sake of survival, could only muster their strength and follow closely behind.

Night deepened, and after two hours of arduous travel, they were panting, their clothes soaked and icy.

Finally, the first wisp of dark red demonic mist brushed their faces, and they crossed the border, stepping onto the land of the Demon Realm.

Instantly, the pungent smell of sulfur mixed with dense demonic energy filled their nostrils, causing them to cough repeatedly. Those with weaker cultivation turned pale, barely managing to suppress their coughs by circulating their spiritual energy.

Before them lay a desolate plain, the dark red earth cracked and barren.

In the distance, dark mountain peaks stretched endlessly, their summits ablaze with perpetually burning volcanoes. The interplay of fire and demonic energy painted the sky a somber, oppressive red,

conveying a sense of apocalyptic desolation. Shen Tong suppressed his unease, signaling everyone to remain calm and continue onward.

The Demon Realm was fraught with peril, teeming not only with ferocious demonic beasts but also with bizarre creatures that bewitched souls.

His former True Immortal strength had been reduced to a mere half-step True Immortal due to a wounded soul, leaving him only with the foundation of an Upper Immortal. Yet, to protect his disciples, he had no choice but to force his way through, slaying scattered low-level demonic beasts.

For three days and three nights, the group dared not rest, subsisting on dry rations and drinking river water tinged with demonic energy, taking turns standing guard in hidden mountain caves.

Along the way, several weaker disciples were attacked and wounded by demonic creatures, their bodies consumed by demonic energy and driven mad. Shen Tong, with a heavy heart, painfully ended their lives, filled

with grief but powerless to help. He could only lead the remaining group towards the territory of the Demon Dragon lineage.

On the third day at dusk, a majestic and menacing black palace came into view.

The palace stood atop the mountains, constructed entirely of jet-black demonic jade. Its ceiling was adorned with countless ferocious dragon reliefs, their eyes bloodshot, fangs bared, and shrouded in demonic energy, radiating overwhelming ferocity and oppressive power.

This was the Demon Dragon Palace, the residence of the Demon Dragon leader, Long Yuan.

Shen Tong stopped, gazing at the palace, his heart filled with mixed emotions.

Just months ago, he had led his elite forces in the siege of Yunxian City, displaying immense power and disregard for the demon race; now, his family was destroyed, and he had to humbly beg his former defeated foes for refuge.

This stark contrast and humiliation weighed heavily on his chest, yet he had no choice but to accept it.

“Let’s go,”

Shen Tong said, suppressing his emotions and forcing a humble expression as he strode towards the foot of the mountain.

Behind him, his disciples bowed their heads, uneasy and barely daring to breathe.

Just as they reached the foot of the mountain, before they could even step onto the stone steps, a sharp shout suddenly rang out: “Halt! Who goes there? How dare you trespass into the forbidden area of the Demon Dragon Palace!”

Before the words had even finished, dozens of dark figures darted out like ghosts, instantly surrounding the group.

These Demon Dragon warriors wore jet-black dragon-patterned armor, wielded demon-patterned spears, and had icy eyes filled with murderous intent.

The young general, whose cultivation had reached the peak of the Upper Immortal Realm, swept his sharp gaze over Shen Tong and the others. Noticing the traces of the temple's robes on their bodies, he frowned and

asked, "Are you from the temple? What is your purpose?" Shen Tong quickly stepped forward, bowing deeply and displaying an extremely humble posture. "I am Shen Tong, the temple master. I have come to request an audience with the leader of Longyuan. Please inform him that I have important matters to discuss."

The young general's expression changed drastically. Shock flashed in his eyes, which then turned into wariness and hostility. He took a step back and shouted sharply, "Alert! All troops on alert! Enemy attack! The people from the temple must have come for revenge!"

In an instant, alarm bells rang, and countless demonic dragon warriors surged in like a tide, surrounding the group in layers, their spears pointed, demonic energy soaring into the sky, the atmosphere extremely tense.

Shen Tong's expression changed drastically. He waved his hands frantically and explained, "Misunderstanding! General, please don't misunderstand! I haven't come for revenge, I've come to join Chief Long Yuan! I have no ill intentions!"

The young general sneered, "Join? A dignified temple master, a True Immortal realm expert, joining a demonic dragon? You didn't hold back in hunting down my clan back then, and now you say you're joining? Who would believe that!"

Shen Tong was sweating profusely, wanting to explain but not knowing where to begin, filled with despair.

At the critical moment, a terrifying pressure swept in from the depths of the hall, carrying a strong demonic dragon aura, forcing the warriors to lower their heads and dare not breathe.

Shen Tong's heart sank; he knew Long Yuan had arrived.

Several figures landed swiftly, the leader being none other than Long Yuan.

He wore a dark gold dragon-patterned robe, his face resolute, his eyes cold, followed by several True Immortal realm elders.

Long Yuan sized up Shen Tong, noticing his tattered clothes and lack of authority. A flicker of surprise crossed his eyes, followed by a cold sneer: "So it's the Lord of the Divine Power Palace. You've got some nerve, daring to trespass into my Demon Dragon Palace. Did you not suffer enough defeat in Cloud Immortal City and come here for revenge?"

With that, Long Yuan waved his hand and gave a stern order: "Form ranks! Prepare to meet the enemy! Trespassers will be killed without mercy!"

"Roar!"

The Demon Dragon warriors roared in unison, their killing intent soaring, and they were about to attack. Shen Tong was terrified, his body trembling. Knowing his cultivation had plummeted and his forces were only remnants, he was no match for them.

In desperation, he disregarded his dignity and knelt before Long Yuan with a thud, his knees hitting the ground with a dull thud.

"Chief Long Yuan! Please calm your anger! It's a misunderstanding! I'm not here for revenge, I've come to seek refuge with you! Please, Chief, take me in!"

Shen Tong's voice was hoarse and choked with sobs, filled with bitter humility.

Long Yuan was stunned, staring at the kneeling, utterly humble Shen Tong, his face filled with disbelief, even thinking it was a hallucination.

He looked up at the sky to confirm it was real before frowning and saying, "What did you say? Seek refuge?"

A high-ranking True Immortal realm expert, a proud divine cultivator, kneeling and begging for refuge—it was utterly absurd.

Shen Tong, his forehead pressed to the ground, recounted his ordeal in a bitter voice: "Leader, the temple is destroyed, the sacred mountain is scorched earth, my disciples are almost all dead or wounded, and I have been severely injured, my cultivation has plummeted, and I have nowhere to go. I only beg the leader to have mercy and give me a place to stay."

He looked up, his eyes bloodshot, full of pleading: "I, Shen Tong, swear that from now on I will completely submit to the Demon Dragon lineage, serve them like a dog, go through fire and water without hesitation, and have no other intentions! If I break this vow, may I be struck down by heaven and earth!"

Long Yuan was silent for a moment, seeing that Shen Tong's pitiful state seemed genuine, and recalling the news of the destruction of the sacred mountain, he believed him somewhat.

Then he laughed loudly, his laughter filled with mocking pleasure: "Shen Tong, Shen Tong, you've finally met your end? Back then, you were so powerful, besieging my clan, killing my compatriots and seizing my territory, how arrogant you were. Now that you're down on your luck, you think of begging me for shelter?"

Shen Tong gritted his teeth and lowered his head, his hands clenched so tightly that blood seeped from his palms, his heart filled with extreme humiliation but daring not to refute, silently enduring it.

Seeing that he dared not speak his anger, Long Yuan felt even more pleased and coldly said, “You say you’re surrendering, what qualifications do you have? The temple is gone, the power is gone, only two hundred remnants remain, and you yourself are a stray dog, your cultivation greatly diminished.

If I take you in, I’ll have to feed and drink you, adding two hundred mouths for nothing, what benefit will that bring?”

Shen Tong quickly looked up, his eyes flashing with hope, “Leader! Although my cultivation has greatly diminished, my foundation is still there. I was originally a second-grade True Immortal, and as long as I recuperate, I can return to my peak or even advance further.

True Immortal realm combat power is top-tier in the Demon Realm. In the future, when you conquer and expand, I will definitely charge into battle and make great contributions! I am willing to be loyal forever, without any disloyalty!”

Long Yuan’s eyes flickered as he fell into deep thought.

After all, Shen Tong was once a True Immortal realm expert. Even a fallen camel is bigger than a horse. His recovery would greatly enhance the combat power of the Demon Dragon lineage, so this deal wasn’t a loss.

After a moment of silence, Long Yuan spoke calmly, “Get up.”

Shen Tong was stunned for a moment, then overjoyed. He struggled to his feet and repeatedly bowed his hands in thanks, “Thank you for taking me in, Chief! I swear to be loyal to you to the death and will never dare to disobey!”

Long Yuan’s eyes were cold as he warned, “Don’t be too happy yet. Taking you in is fine, but you must remember that from now on you are no longer the Temple Master, but merely a dog of my Demon Dragon lineage.

I can tell you to go east or west, to die or live. Obey my orders in everything, and do not disobey, understand?”

These words were like sharp blades piercing his heart. Shen Tong’s face stiffened, intense humiliation flashed in his eyes, his cheeks flushed red, his fists clenched, and his heart was filled with resentment and anger.

But seeing the warriors around him still filled with murderous intent and the terrified disciples behind him, and realizing his desperate situation, he finally suppressed his humiliation and lowered his head humbly, saying, “Your subordinate understands, I will follow your orders. Thank you, Chief.”

Long Yuan nodded in satisfaction and was about to give instructions when a cold, indifferent voice carrying endless pressure suddenly came from behind: “Long Yuan, what are you doing?”

Hearing this voice, Long Yuan trembled violently, his smugness and majesty vanishing instantly, replaced by extreme respect, awe, and even panic.

He quickly turned around and stepped forward, bowing deeply: “Senior!”

All the demonic dragon warriors, including the young generals and elders, changed their expressions drastically, bowing their heads and not daring to breathe, clearly showing the utmost respect for the owner of the voice.

Deep within the Demonic Dragon Palace, two figures calmly emerged, each step carrying an invisible pressure that subjugated the surrounding demonic energy.

In front was a young man in black, tall and handsome, with eyes as deep as a cold pool. His aura was restrained, seemingly calm, yet exuding a heart-pounding sense of oppression, as if he were the center of the world.

This person was Ning Zhi.

Su Yuqi was beside him.

Long Yuan quickly stepped forward, bowing respectfully, and explained, “Reporting to Senior, the Temple Master Shen Tong has brought his remaining disciples to seek refuge. I was considering taking them in and specifically requested your permission, Senior.”

Ning Zhi paused, his deep gaze falling directly on Shen Tong not far away, giving him a fleeting glance.

Shen Tong trembled violently as if struck by lightning, his hair standing on end, a bone-chilling cold shooting from his feet to the top of his head.

Looking at Ning Zhi, his legs went weak, the image of the destroyed Holy Mountain flashing through his mind, fear surging like a tidal wave, almost overwhelming him.

He instinctively lowered his head, not daring to meet his gaze even slightly, breathing cautiously for fear of displeasing the fiend.

Ning Zhi slowly walked to Shen Tong, calmly looking at him, suddenly a faint smile appearing on his lips.

But this smile held no warmth whatsoever; instead, it made Shen Tong feel an even greater chill, his whole body turning icy cold, his soul almost leaving his body.

“Shen Tong?”

Ning Zhi spoke calmly, his voice serene yet carrying an undeniable pressure. “I remember you. Last time in Yunxian City, you ran away quickly when things went wrong, narrowly escaping with your life.”

Shen Tong trembled violently, unable to hold on any longer, and knelt down again with a thud, his forehead pressed tightly to the ground. His voice trembled as he begged for mercy incoherently: “Senior…Senior, spare my life! Please spare my life! I was blind to your greatness. I offended you in Yunxian City. I know I was wrong. Please forgive me this

time! I am willing to completely submit to you, to be at your beck and call, to serve you like a dog or a horse, and to have no other intentions!”

Ning Zhi looked at the kneeling, trembling Shen Tong, saying nothing but watching quietly. His gaze was calm as water, yet it made Shen Tong feel increasingly uneasy, his heart pounding wildly as if it would leap out of his chest.

Shen Tong thought he was hesitating and worried that he wouldn’t be taken in, so he quickly continued, his voice becoming increasingly humble and pleading: “Senior, although my cultivation has plummeted, I am still a True Immortal. If you give me a chance, I will quickly recover my cultivation. I will do anything you ask of me in the future, even if it means going through fire and water! I only ask that you take me in and give me a way to live!”

He slowly raised his head, his eyes filled with humble pleading and fear, staring intently at Ning Zhi, awaiting his judgment. Ning Zhi remained silent for a moment before slowly speaking, his voice indifferent and emotionless: “You said you want to pledge allegiance to me?”

Shen Tong nodded frantically, his voice trembling: “Yes, yes, yes! Your subordinate is willing to pledge allegiance, to be loyal forever, and to serve you at will!”

Ning Zhi’s lips curled into a cruel and cold smile, his eyes instantly turning icy and devoid of any warmth. He spoke slowly and deliberately: “But I don’t need dogs.”

These words struck Shen Tong like a thunderbolt. The pleading hope on his face froze instantly, his smile solidified, his eyes vacant and filled with disbelief. He stood frozen in place, as if his soul had been ripped away.

Before Shen Tong could react, Ning Zhi slowly raised his right hand, and a wisp of pitch-black demonic flame slowly rose from his palm.

This demonic flame, seemingly weak, contained a terrifying power capable of destroying the world. The surrounding air scorched and hissed, space subtly distorted, and a terrifying pressure instantly filled the entire area.

“The Temple Master, a True Immortal Realm expert…”

Ning Zhi repeated softly, his tone tinged with a hint of playful disdain, “You think you’re worthy of serving me? Do you think you’re qualified?”

Shen Tong’s face turned deathly pale, his body trembling violently, his eyes filled with extreme terror. He tried to beg for mercy and try to escape, but under Ning Zhi’s oppressive aura, he was stiff and unable to move, unable to even utter a word, only able to let out a weak whimper.

“Senior! Spare me! Please spare me! I… I’ll never dare to do it again!”

Shen Tong pleaded desperately with all his might.

But Ning Zhi didn’t give him a chance to finish speaking. His eyes were indifferent, and he lightly waved his right hand.

In an instant, black demonic flames erupted from his palm like a volcanic eruption, transforming into a raging black sea of fire, carrying the power to scorch the heavens and boil the seas, instantly engulfing Shen Tong and the more than two hundred disciples behind him, leaving no blind spots.

“No!!!”

Shen Tong let out an extremely shrill and heart-wrenching scream, filled with despair and pain.

He desperately channeled his remaining spiritual energy to resist, but the energy melted instantly before the demonic flames, like snow meeting the scorching sun, offering no resistance whatsoever.

The black demonic flames scorched his flesh and soul relentlessly, the excruciating pain overwhelming him, causing him to writhe and scream in agony.

But the demonic flames clung to him like a leech, impossible to extinguish no matter how much he struggled and fought, only growing ever stronger.

The two hundred disciples behind him were completely swallowed up before they could even utter a few screams, their bodies and souls instantly reduced to nothingness.

In just a few breaths, Shen Tong's screams vanished completely, leaving no trace.

The black demonic flames slowly died down and dissipated.

Only a charred patch remained in the open space before the mountain gate, the hard, dark red ground cracked and melted from the heat; nothing else existed.

Shen Tong and his two hundred disciples left not even a bone or a wisp of soul behind, completely reduced to ashes and vanished from the world. From that moment on, the Temple Master Shen Tong ceased to exist.

Long Yuan stood frozen, his face deathly pale, his legs trembling, almost collapsing.

He opened his mouth to speak, but his throat was dry and he couldn't utter a sound, his heart filled with extreme fear and shock.

He had originally thought that taking in a supernatural power would be a great thing, increasing his True Immortal realm combat strength, but he had completely forgotten that Ning Zhi didn't even bother with such a small amount of power.

In Ning Zhi's eyes, supernatural powers were nothing more than ants that he could crush with a flick of his wrist, insignificant.

Ants who submitted to Ning Zhi were meaningless, and even an eyesore, which he

would easily eliminate. Long Yuan was filled with lingering fear, thankful that he hadn't taken it in on his own, otherwise he might have been implicated as well.

He kept his head down, not daring to look at Ning Zhi's back, cold sweat pouring down his body and soaking his inner shirt.

Ning Zhi slowly withdrew his right hand, his expression calm, as if he had just done something insignificant, without the slightest ripple of emotion.

He turned to Su Yuqi beside him, his tone still calm and gentle: "Senior Sister, let's go. There's no need to waste time here."

Su Yuqi nodded slightly, her cold gaze sweeping over the charred marks, a faint, complex expression flashing in her eyes before returning to her usual indifference. Without saying another word, she followed Ning Zhi and slowly walked into the depths of the Demon Dragon Palace, their figures gradually disappearing behind the palace gates.

Long Yuan stood there watching the two departing figures, not daring to move for a long time.

After a long while, he slowly came to his senses, raised his hand to wipe the cold sweat from his forehead and neck, and whispered to his subordinates in a trembling voice: "Quickly... quickly clean this place up, don't leave any trace, and don't spread this matter outside, remember!" After

saying that, he didn't dare to linger, quickly turned around and followed Ning Zhi into the depths of the palace, his awe of Ning Zhi growing even stronger, and he dared not have the slightest disloyalty.

At this moment, atop a dark mountain peak a hundred miles away from the Demon Dragon Palace, behind a massive boulder, a figure lay motionless, trembling violently, his face deathly pale, his eyes filled with utter terror, barely daring to breathe.

This was the spy specially sent by the Divine Hall to track Shen Tong.

He had been cautiously following him from the Holy Domain of Light, careful not to reveal himself, intending to find out Shen Tong's whereabouts and location before immediately returning to the Divine Hall to report to Hall Master Yao Chen.

But he never expected to witness such a horrifying and shocking scene: the black-clad youth, Ning Zhi, with a mere wave of his hand, had reduced Shen Tong, a True Immortal Realm expert, and over two hundred disciples to ashes, leaving not even bones behind. Recalling

the scene of the black demonic flames filling the sky and Shen Tong's agonizing screams, the spy felt his scalp tingle, his body grow cold, and his soul

nearly leave him. He knew in his heart that the young man named Ning Zhi possessed unimaginable strength, an existence beyond human power to contend with; he was simply a ruthless demon who killed without blinking an eye.

Suppressing his fear, he scrambled out from behind the boulder, daring not to linger. He channeled all his spiritual energy and raced madly towards the Holy Land of Light, wishing he could sprout wings and fly back to the Divine Hall.

He had only one thought: he must tell Hall Master Yao Chen everything. This terrifying enemy required the Divine Hall to be on alert, or the Divine Hall would inevitably suffer the same fate as the Temple.

He raced relentlessly for several days, finally arriving back at the Holy Land of Light, reaching the Holy Light Peak where the Divine Hall headquarters was located. At the summit of Holy Light Peak, the

magnificent and resplendent Divine Hall stood majestically. The Hall Master, Yao Chen, sat there, clad in a pristine white holy robe, his handsome face and refined demeanor exuding elegance. He toyed with a jade

slip imbued with holy light, his expression serene and composed. Below, the scout who had rushed back from the Demon Realm, covered in dust and disheveled, trembled uncontrollably, his face deathly pale. He knelt in the center of the hall, his head pressed tightly to the ground, his voice trembling so much he could barely speak.

Yao Chen slowly put down the jade slip in his hand, looked at the trembling scout below, his brows furrowed slightly, and his tone was calm with a hint of doubt: “You followed Shen Tong all the way, why are you in such a sorry state? Did something happen? Tell me slowly, there’s no need to panic.”

The scout swallowed hard, forcibly suppressing his fear, his voice still trembling as he reported everything he had seen in front of the Demon Dragon Palace in the Demon Realm: “Palace…Palace Master, I saw it with my own eyes, there is not a single falsehood!

Shen Tong led more than two hundred remaining disciples of the Divine Palace to escape into the Demon Realm to seek refuge with the Demon Dragon lineage. The Demon Dragon leader, Long Yuan, had originally agreed to take them in.

But at this moment, that person called…” Ning Zhi’s young man in black suddenly appeared, and then… then he simply waved his hand, releasing a ball of black demonic flame, which burned Shen Tong and the more than two hundred disciples to death!

Not even bones, not even a trace of their souls remained, completely reduced to ashes! ”

The scout’s voice trembled more and more with fear as he spoke: “That Shen Tong was a second-grade True Immortal Realm expert, yet he didn’t even have a chance to resist Ning Zhi. His screams didn’t even last long before he was gone!

That black demonic flame was too terrifying; we simply couldn't contend with it!"

Yao Chen's calm expression vanished instantly, his brows furrowed tightly, and his expression became solemn.

He slowly stood up, his tone filled with disbelief: "What did you say? A single fire instantly burned Shen Tong, a True Immortal Realm expert, and more than two hundred disciples to death? They didn't even have the power to resist?"

"Yes! I swear on my life, every word is true! I saw it with my own eyes and dare not conceal anything!" The scout quickly kowtowed, his voice firm.

Yao Chen slowly descended the steps, standing with his hands behind his back in the center of the hall, silent, his aura growing increasingly heavy.

He had learned from the battle of Yunxian City that Ning Zhi was a formidable force, but he never expected Ning Zhi to be this powerful.

A second-grade True Immortal's divine abilities were like ants before him, easily annihilated; this strength far exceeded his comprehension.

He himself was also a True Immortal, his cultivation slightly higher than Ning Zhi's, but only by a limited margin.

If Ning Zhi attacked him, or the Divine Hall, how many moves could he withstand?

Could the Divine Hall's protective array withstand that terrifying black demonic flame?

A chill instantly surged from Yao Chen's heart, spreading throughout his body, causing him to shiver involuntarily. For the first time, a deep sense of apprehension arose within him, even a barely perceptible fear.

"Go down,"

Yao Chen finally said after a long silence, waving his hand slowly, his tone extremely heavy, without uttering another word.

The scout quickly kowtowed in thanks and hurried out of the hall, not daring to linger.

Only Yao Chen remained in the main hall, silent and still.

He stood there silently for a long time, then slowly raised his head to look at the sky outside the hall's window.

The sky above the Holy Domain of Light outside the window was still a clear, azure blue, and holy light still enveloped the entire land, a scene of peace and tranquility. But a thick gloom clouded Yao Chen's eyes, and his usual composure was gone.

"Ning Zhi..."

he murmured softly, his tone full of apprehension and a hint of deep-seated fear, "What is the background of this young man? What does he want? With him in charge of the Demon Dragon lineage, what exactly does he want to do?"

He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and forcibly suppressed the fear and unease in his heart. When he opened his eyes again, the panic in his eyes had disappeared, replaced by a resolute and solemn expression.

He knew that an unprecedented crisis was quietly approaching, and if he was not careful, the Divine Hall would suffer the same fate as the Temple and be destroyed in an instant.

"Guards!" Yao Chen spoke in a deep voice, his voice authoritative and carrying an unyielding command.

An elder guardian strode into the main hall, bowed respectfully, and said, "Your subordinate is here. What are your orders, Master?"

Yao Chen gazed intently at the distant Demon Realm, his voice heavy and resolute as he spoke each word clearly: “Pass down the order: the Divine Hall is immediately placed on Level One alert. All disciples on missions outside, regardless of their location or whether their missions have been completed, are to be recalled to Holy Light Peak immediately!

The mountain-protecting array is to be fully activated and operate around the clock without the slightest slackening. All elders are to take turns on duty to guard against any unusual activity!”

The elder guardian strode in astonishment, his face full of confusion, and hurriedly asked, “Master, what major event has occurred that necessitates activating Level One alert? This is unprecedented since the establishment of the Divine Hall!”

Yao Chen did not answer, but continued to gaze into the distance, his eyes deep and his voice low, as he slowly uttered a sentence: “A storm powerful enough to overturn the entire Holy Light Realm is about to arrive. We must be fully prepared, or else we will face utter annihilation.” The news of the Divine Hall entering a state of high alert was like a boulder thrown into a calm lake, instantly creating a massive upheaval throughout the Holy Domain of Light.

On Holy Light Peak, the protective array was operating at full capacity, a golden light shield completely enveloping the entire mountain, preventing even a bird from easily passing through.

At the foot of the mountain, checkpoints were set up at every key point, with Divine Hall disciples stationed every three or five steps, their faces grave, as if facing a formidable enemy. The pilgrimage routes, normally open to the public, were now completely closed, with no one allowed to enter or leave.

The news caused an uproar among the various factions within the Holy Domain of Light.

“What is the Divine Hall doing? A state of high alert? That’s unprecedented since the Divine Hall’s

founding!” “I heard even the elders and disciples on missions have been urgently recalled; is this a war?”

“Could it be that the Demon Clan is about to attack? I heard the Temple of the Fourteenth Heaven has been destroyed, and the Demon Dragon lineage is unstoppable…”

Discussions rose and fell, panic spreading like a plague.

What shocked everyone even more was that news of the annihilation of the Holy Purity Sect spread throughout the entire Holy Domain of Light at the same time.

The majestic mountain gate that had stood for thousands of years was now a ruin.

Thousands of disciples perished; Vice Sect Leader Qingxu, Sect Leader Qingxuan, and even the elders at the True Immortal realm were all dead.

It was said that only a handful of people were responsible for the murders, the leader being a young man, a fourth-grade Upper Immortal, who had killed Sect Leader Qingxuan, a second-grade True Immortal, with a single palm strike.

“A fourth-grade Upper Immortal killing a second-grade True Immortal? How is that possible!”

“I heard that man is called Kai, the reincarnation of the Dragon Emperor who caused such a stir in the Fourteenth Heaven!”

“He destroyed the Divine Temple, and now he’s in the Holy Domain of Light? What does he want?”

Panic intensified.

Some smaller sects began quietly packing their belongings, preparing to flee.

Mid-sized powers urgently recalled their disciples, activated their protective mountain formations, and tightly closed their gates.

Those forces allied with the Holy Purity Sect were filled with dread, fearing they would be next.

Throughout the entire Holy Land of Light, a tense atmosphere prevailed, with everyone on edge.

Meanwhile, in a small town a hundred miles from Holy Light Peak, Kai sat leisurely in an unassuming teahouse, sipping his tea.

Yun Xi sat opposite him, her expression serene. Ming Li and Liu Qianqian sat at the next table, close together, whispering to each other.

Yun Yao leaned against the window, listlessly watching the people coming and going on the street.

“Young Master Chen, when are we going to the Divine Hall?” Yun Yao turned and asked softly.

Kai put down his teacup and said indifferently, “No rush.”

Yun Yao pouted, about to say something, when Ming Li suddenly spoke up: “Mr. Chen, I just went out to scout things out, and the situation isn’t quite right.”

Kai looked at him.

Ming Li lowered his voice: “The Divine Hall has entered Level One alert. Holy Light Peak is sealed off, the mountain-protecting array is fully activated, and there are patrolling disciples everywhere at the foot of the mountain. Don’t even mention going up the mountain, you’ll be checked if you get within ten miles.”

“Level One alert?” Yun Xi raised an eyebrow. “What is the Divine Hall doing?”

Ming Li shook his head: “I don’t know. But there are many rumors outside. Some say the Demon Clan is going to attack, some say…” He glanced at Kai, hesitating to continue.

“What are they saying?” Kai asked.

“Some say it’s because we destroyed the Holy Purity Sect, and the Divine Hall is afraid we’ll come after them, so they’re taking precautions in advance.”

Upon hearing this, Kai’s lips curled up slightly, a faint smile appearing on his face.

“Because of us?” He shook his head. “Impossible.”

“Why?” Ming Li asked, puzzled.

Kai picked up his teacup, took a sip, and slowly said, “What is the Divine Hall? It’s one of the oldest powers in the Holy Domain of Light, established for tens of thousands of years, claiming to be the orthodox lineage of the gods. Their arrogance is ingrained in their bones.”

He put down his teacup, his gaze calm: “In their eyes, we are nothing more than a few rogue cultivators at the Upper Immortal Realm, like ants. Even if we destroy the Holy Purity Sect, they will see it as nothing more than dogs fighting each other, not something that would make them feel like they are facing a formidable enemy.”

Ming Li nodded thoughtfully.

“Anything that could put the Divine Hall on high alert must be something that they feel is a deadly threat.”

Kai stood up, walked to the window, and looked towards the distant Holy Light Peak. “And it must be something of immense importance.”

“Then what do we do?” Yun Yao asked. “Should we still go after the Divine Hall?”

Kai was silent for a moment, then said calmly, “Go after them, but not now. First, find out what they’re afraid of.”

He turned to Ming Li: “Ming Li, go and find out if there’s anything unusual about the Divine Hall lately. Especially…” He paused, “…anything related to the Demon Clan.”

Ming Li was taken aback: “The Demon Clan?”

Kai nodded, then looked at Yun Yao and said, “Do you remember the monsters we encountered when we were hiding from the Holy Pure Sect and entering a large forest?”

Yun Yao’s expression changed slightly.

Of course she remembered those monsters with fused divine and demonic bloodlines.

Their twisted appearances, their crazed eyes, and the eerie presence that simultaneously exuded two completely different auras—even now, the thought of them sent chills down her spine.

“Young Master Chen, you mean…”

“Those monsters couldn’t have appeared naturally,”

Kai said calmly. “There must be someone manipulating them. And in the Holy Domain of Light, the number of forces with that ability and the audacity is extremely limited.”

“Mr. Chen, what monsters?” Ming Li asked.

Kai recounted to the others the inhuman, ghost-like monsters he had encountered when he first came to the Holy Domain of Light.

Ming Li gasped: “Such a thing exists?”

Kai nodded: “Go investigate. Be careful, don’t alert them.”

Ming Li nodded emphatically and turned to leave.

Liu Qianqian hesitated for a moment, then followed.

Yun Xi watched Kai's retreating figure and said softly, "Do you think the Divine Hall is up to something?"

Kai turned around and looked at her: "The Divine Hall can revive Ghost Clan Venerables using cultivator bloodlines, why can't the Divine Hall do something even more outrageous?"

Yun Xi was silent for a moment, then slowly nodded.

Yes, these so-called righteous paths, outwardly glamorous, often do things even more sordid than the Demon Clan.

"I'll go check it out too."

Yunxi stood up. "Although the Ghost Clan doesn't have much influence in the Holy Land of Light, they can still find a few informants."

Kai nodded: "Be careful."

After Yunxi left, only Kai and Yun Yao remained in the teahouse.

Yun Yao leaned against the window, watching the people come and go on the street, and suddenly whispered, "Young Master Chen, do you think... the Divine Hall would really do such a thing?"

Kai looked at her but didn't speak.

Yun Yao turned her head, a hint of confusion in her eyes, "When I was in the Holy Purity Sect, they always said they were the righteous path, the guardians of the Holy Land of Light. But what they did to me... wasn't honorable at all."

She lowered her head, her voice growing softer, "Later, I escaped, thinking that all righteous people in the world were the same. But you're

different, Young Master Chen, Sister Yun Xi is different, Ming Li and Qian Qian are different too. I thought, maybe there are good people in the righteous path too…" "Even the people of the Divine Hall, a race of gods, are bad people…" She looked up, her eyes full of confusion. "Then what exactly is the righteous path? What is true light?"

Kai looked at her, remained silent for a long time, and slowly said, "The righteous path isn't something you talk about, it's something you do. Light isn't something given by others, it's something you have in your heart."

He stood up, walked to the window, and stood with his hands behind his back.

"Those who claim to be on the righteous path aren't necessarily good people. And those demonic cultivators who are despised aren't necessarily bad people. Right and wrong aren't determined by status, but by the heart."

Yun Yao nodded, seemingly understanding.

Kai didn't say anything more, but just gazed in the direction of Holy Light Peak in the distance, his gaze deep.

A few days later, Ming Li and Liu Qianqian returned first.

Neither of them looked very good.

"Mr. Chen, I've found out." Ming Li sat down, lowering his voice. "The Divine Hall is indeed secretly capturing demonic cultivators."

Kai's expression remained unchanged. "Continue."

Ming Li said, "It's not just demonic cultivators, but also some ordinary rogue cultivators from the Divine Race. After these people were captured, they never appeared again. Their families and friends went to the Divine Hall to ask for them back, but the answer they received was

always, ‘This person has left Holy Light Peak and their whereabouts are unknown.’”

“Unknown whereabouts…” Kai repeated, a cold smile curling at the corner of his mouth.

“There’s more.” Ming Li continued, “I found someone on the edge of the Demon Realm. His younger brother was one of the demonic cultivators captured by the Divine Hall. He said that before his brother was captured, he secretly sent him a message using a jade slip.”

“What did he say?”

Ming Li took a deep breath, enunciating each word clearly. “He said the Divine Hall is carrying out a crazy plan. They want to fuse the bloodlines of the Divine Race and the Demon Race to create a super cultivator who possesses the power of both races.”

The teahouse fell silent.

Yun Yao’s eyes widened, her face filled with disbelief.

Kai, however, remained calm, as if he had already guessed it.

“Just as I expected.” He said indifferently.

Ming Li continued, “That demonic cultivator said that the Divine Hall captured many people and imprisoned them in a secret place, forcibly injecting them with another bloodline. Most of them died during the fusion process, and those who survived… became monsters, losing their minds and only capable of killing each other.”

“Those monsters…” Yun Yao said tremulously, “are the ones we encountered before?”

Ming Li nodded heavily.

Kai was silent for a moment, then asked, “Where is that place?”

“Deep in the dense forest, three hundred miles east of Holy Light Peak,” Ming Li said. “The Divine Hall has set up a restriction there, and outsiders cannot enter. But that demonic cultivator said that before his brother was captured, he had seen that place from afar.”

Kai stood up, hands behind his back, a cold glint in his eyes.

“The Divine Hall…” he said softly, his tone calm, yet carrying a chilling aura, “is even worse than the Divine Temple.”

Yun Xi returned at this moment.

Her expression was equally unpleasant.

“I found out.” She sat down, her tone heavy. “The Divine Hall is indeed conducting experiments on bloodline fusion. And…” She paused, “They’ve succeeded.”

Kai frowned. “Successfully?”

Yun Xi nodded. “I secretly captured a Divine Hall elder and used our Ghost Clan’s secret technique to bewitch him, that’s how I found out.

He said the Divine Hall successfully created a finished product a few months ago. That monster possesses the dual bloodlines of both gods and demons, its strength is terrifying. The Divine Hall has imprisoned it deep within the forbidden area and is still observing it.”

“Only one?” Kai asked.

“Only one so far,” Yun Xi said. “But the Divine Hall is continuing to capture demonic cultivators and rogue cultivators. Their goal is to create such an army.”

An army of monsters possessing the dual bloodlines of gods and demons.

Kai closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

After a long while, he opened his eyes, his gaze filled with coldness.

“This Divine Hall deserves to die more than the Divine Temple.”

Although the Divine Temple extracted cultivators’ bloodlines to revive Ghost Clan Venerables, at least it had a clear purpose: to revive the strong and strengthen itself.

The Divine Hall, however, used living people as experimental subjects, letting them die in agony or turn them into mindless monsters who would kill each other.

This was a desecration of life and a trampling of humanity.

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

Kai looked out the window, his gaze sweeping across the town and the plains, landing on the Holy Light Peak shrouded in golden light.

“No rush,” he said calmly. “The Divine Hall is on high alert. It’s unwise to force our way in now. Besides…” He paused, “Someone will be more anxious than us.”

“Who?” Ming Li was taken aback.

Kai’s lips curled slightly: “Those demonic cultivators who were captured are not without background. After the war between gods and demons, the number of demonic cultivators decreased, but that doesn’t mean they all disappeared completely. They also have fellow disciples and clansmen. When the time comes, we won’t even need to lift a finger; someone will naturally come after the Divine Hall.”

He turned to look at everyone: “Let’s keep an eye on things and wait for an opportunity.”

In the following days, Kai and the others settled down in the town, secretly observing the Divine Hall’s movements.

Meanwhile, deep within the Demon Dragon Palace of the Demon Realm, in a secret chamber, Ning Zhi stood with his hands behind his back, gazing at a map hanging on the wall.

The map marked the distribution of power throughout the Celestial Realm, with the location of the Holy Light Domain circled in red.

Long Yuan stood behind him, barely daring to breathe.

Ever since Shen Tong was burned to death by Ning Zhi, Long Yuan had grown increasingly awe of this young man, even to the point of fear.

He was always cautious, afraid of doing anything to anger this ruthless star.

“Long Yuan,” Ning Zhi suddenly spoke.

Long Yuan trembled and hurriedly stepped forward: “What are your orders, Senior?”

Ning Zhi turned around, looked at him, and said calmly: “Have there been any reports of demonic cultivators going missing recently?”

Long Yuan was taken aback, thought for a moment, and said: “Yes, Senior. Several small tribes on the border of the Demon Realm have gone missing recently. I sent people to investigate, but we haven’t found any clues. I thought they were eaten by demonic beasts, so I didn’t pay much attention.”

Ning Zhi’s eyes turned cold: “Eaten by demonic beasts?”

“I was just guessing…” Long Yuan didn’t dare to look Ning Zhi in the eye.

Ning Zhi sneered: “Those missing people were captured by the Divine Hall.”

Long Yuan was shocked: “The Divine Hall? What are they doing capturing demonic cultivators?”

Ning Zhi didn't answer, but looked at the Holy Domain of Light on the map, a hint of killing intent flashing in his eyes.

"Long Yuan, how much do you know about the Divine Hall?"

Long Yuan thought for a moment and said, "The Divine Hall is one of the oldest forces in the Holy Domain of Light, having been established for tens of thousands of years, and claiming to be the orthodox lineage of the gods. They have always considered themselves the righteous path and look down on our demon race. However, in recent years they have kept a low profile and rarely interact with the outside world." "Keep a low profile?" Ning Zhi's lips curled into a mocking smile. "They're not keeping a low profile; they're quietly doing something big."

He turned to look at Long Yuan: "The Divine Hall is secretly capturing demonic cultivators and rogue cultivators to conduct bloodline fusion experiments. They want to fuse the bloodlines of the divine race and the demon race to create a super cultivator possessing the power of both races."

"The reason my senior sister and I stayed in the Fourteenth Heaven was precisely for this reason. These people of the divine race are too arrogant; they don't take the demon race seriously at all, daring to defy the Heavenly Dao..."

Long Yuan's expression changed drastically: "What?! How dare they!"

The divine race has always revered bloodlines; to steal and fuse bloodlines with others is a great disgrace.

Moreover, the divine race has always looked down on the demon race, considering their bloodline inferior.

Now they're secretly fusing divine and demon bloodlines to artificially create powerful super cultivators.

"Nothing much; it's just that these divine races wouldn't dare."

A cold glint flashed in Ning Zhi's eyes: "I'm a demonic cultivator now, and I'll make them pay the price."

These words sent a chill down Long Yuan's spine.

He understood.

Although Ning Zhi was a human cultivator, he practiced demonic techniques and used demonic energy, making him essentially no different from a demonic cultivator.

The Divine Hall's capture of demonic cultivators for bloodline experiments was, in Ning Zhi's view, a provocation.

"Senior, what do you plan to do?" Long Yuan asked cautiously.

Ning Zhi turned around, his gaze falling on the location of the Holy Domain of Light on the map, a cruel smile curving his lips.

"What to do?"

he repeated softly, his tone calm, yet carrying a chilling killing intent.

"Of course... annihilate them."

Long Yuan's heart skipped a beat, but he dared not say more.

Ning Zhi stood with his hands behind his back, gazing into the distance, his eyes deep and unfathomable.

"The Divine Hall, the Divine Temple, these so-called righteous paths, they all deserve to die."

His tone was indifferent, as if he were discussing a trivial matter.

"The temple is gone. Now, it's the Divine Hall's turn."

Long Yuan trembled and quickly bowed, saying, “This subordinate will go and summon the demonic dragon army immediately!”

“No need.” Ning Zhi raised his hand to stop him. “This time, I’ll go alone.”

The reason Ning Zhi didn’t want Su Yuqi to come was because Su Yuqi’s state of mind had been unstable recently. If she encountered Kai again and her memories returned, it would be troublesome.

Long Yuan was stunned: “Senior alone? The Divine Hall’s protective formation is no simple matter, and their hall master, Yao Chen, is also a True Immortal Realm expert…”

Ning Zhi glanced at him, his gaze calm, yet it made Long Yuan instantly shut up.

“A formation?” Ning Zhi’s lips curled into a disdainful smile. “That thing, can it stop me?”

Long Yuan opened his mouth, but ultimately didn’t dare to say anything more.

Ning Zhi turned around and walked out of the secret chamber.

As he reached the door, he suddenly stopped and glanced back at Long Yuan: “Keep an eye on my senior sister while I’m gone. If she loses even a single hair, you know the consequences.”

Long Yuan trembled and quickly replied, “Don’t worry, senior! I will definitely protect Miss Su!”

Ning Zhi said nothing more and turned to leave.

His figure quickly disappeared into the dark red light outside the Demon Dragon Palace.

Long Yuan stood there, watching Ning Zhi's departing back, his heart filled with mixed emotions.

He knew that the Holy Domain of Light was about to change.

At this moment, at the summit of Holy Light Peak in the Holy Domain of Light,

Yao Chen stood by the window of the main hall, gazing at the golden protective array below the mountain, his brows furrowed.

For some reason, he had a sense of foreboding these past few days, as if something terrible was about to happen.

"Hall Master."

A guardian elder strode in and bowed, saying, "The news of the destruction of the Holy Pure Sect has spread throughout the entire Holy Domain of Light, and all forces, large and small, are in a state of panic. Several small sects have already closed their doors and fled."

Yao Chen snorted coldly, "They can run away, but they can't hide. Let them run. They'll come back when the storm passes."

The guardian elder hesitated for a moment, then added, "There's one more thing. Kai, with the Golden Dragon bloodline, seems to have appeared near Holy Light Peak."

Yao Chen frowned, "Kai? What is he doing near Holy Light Peak?"

"This subordinate is unaware. However, this person's strength is indeed terrifying. A fourth-grade Upper Immortal can kill the Qingxuan Sect Master, a second-grade True Immortal, with a single palm strike. If he comes to cause trouble for our Divine Hall..."

Yao Chen raised his hand to interrupt him: "He's just a junior, no need to make a fuss. If he dares to come, I will naturally let him know that the Divine Hall is not comparable to the likes of the Holy Qing Sect."

The Guardian Elder nodded and was about to leave when Yao Chen suddenly spoke: “How is the experiment going?”

The Guardian Elder was taken aback and whispered: “Everything is going smoothly. The first finished product has stabilized and is extremely strong. According to our estimates, once it is fully mature, its strength will at least reach the third grade of the True Immortal Realm, or even…”

“Even what?”

“It may even break through the third grade of the True Immortal Realm and reach an even higher level.”

A hint of excitement flashed in Yao Chen’s eyes, but he suppressed it again.

“Continue to observe, and don’t make any mistakes. This is our Divine Hall’s biggest trump card for turning the tide.”

“Yes!”

After the Guardian Elder left, Yao Chen stood alone by the window, looking at the golden light shield below the mountain, a complex expression flashing in his eyes.

He knew perfectly well what he was doing.

Capturing demonic cultivators and rogue cultivators of the divine race for bloodline fusion experiments—if word got out, the reputation of the Divine Hall would be utterly ruined.

Those so-called righteous forces would rise up against it, regarding the Divine Hall as an enemy even more terrifying than the demons.

Moreover, his actions were forbidden by the divine race and violated the laws of heaven.

But he had no other choice; His Majesty of the Divine Hall wanted to control the entire Fourteenth Heaven.

Furthermore, the destruction of the Divine Palace had shown him the impending crisis.

The rise of the Demonic Dragon lineage and Ning Zhi's terrifying strength were all reminders that if he didn't become stronger quickly, the Divine Hall would eventually follow in the footsteps of the Divine Palace.

For the future of the Divine Hall, for its glory, he was willing to do anything.

Even make a deal with the devil.

Yao Chen took a deep breath, suppressing his unease, and turned back to his throne.

Meanwhile, in a small town a hundred miles from Holy Light Peak, Kai stood by the window, gazing towards the distant Holy Light Peak.

"A storm is coming," he murmured.

Yunxi stood behind him, saying calmly, "You sensed it?"

Kai nodded. "The shady dealings of the Divine Hall will be discovered sooner or later. And those demonic cultivators they captured will eventually be held accountable."

He paused, a faint smile playing on his lips.

"I just didn't expect it to come so quickly."

Yunxi was taken aback. "What do you mean?"

Kai didn't speak, only gazing at the distant horizon.

There, a black figure was flying towards the Holy Domain of Light at an astonishing speed, its demonic energy almost tangible, causing even the sky to change color wherever it passed.

Ning Zhi had arrived.

Even from a thousand miles away, Kai could sense Ning Zhi's aura.

He was all too familiar with that aura.

Beneath Holy Light Peak, the wind and clouds shifted.

A golden protective array enveloped the entire mountain, its protective barrier, blessed by countless ancestors of the divine temples over tens of thousands of years, now swirling wildly. Golden runes flowed across the barrier's surface like living things, emitting a low, buzzing sound.

Yet, before the black figure, this seemingly indestructible barrier was as fragile as paper, sending chills down one's spine.

Ning Zhi stood with his hands behind his back, his feet treading on the void, his black robes fluttering in the wind.

He didn't deliberately release any pressure, yet the invisible oppression solidified the air within a hundred miles.

The ground beneath his feet cracked silently, fine fissures spreading outwards from him. Unseen forces lifted pebbles, suspending them in mid-air before instantly turning them to dust.

On Holy Light Peak, the alarm bells rang loudly.

The ancient bell, passed down for tens of thousands of years, rang on its own the instant the great formation was suppressed, its toll rapid and mournful, each note a death knell.

The disciples of the Divine Hall turned pale, trembling violently. Some collapsed to the ground, their legs giving way; others turned to run but

were held back by their companions; still others' hands, gripping their weapons, shook so badly they could barely hold their swords.

"That…who is that?" "

Demonic energy…such terrifying demonic energy! This is not an aura that ordinary demonic cultivators could possess!"

"Quick! Report to the Hall Master! Activate all the restrictions!"

Ning Zhi, at the foot of the mountain, seemed oblivious to everything.

He raised his head, his gaze calmly sweeping over the majestic Holy Light Peak, as if examining an insignificant toy.

The palace atop the peak, shrouded in golden light, was faintly visible. Those flying eaves, brackets, carved beams, and painted rafters—once a sacred place in the hearts of countless cultivators—were now, in his eyes, nothing more than crumbling ruins.

Yao Chen was meditating in the rear hall when he received the news.

He abruptly opened his eyes, his expression changing drastically, and vanished in a flash.

The next instant, he appeared on the stargazing platform at the highest point of the peak.

When he saw the black-clad figure below, his pupils contracted sharply.

Too young.

The face looked to be no more than twenty years old, with fair skin and handsome features. If it weren't for the almost tangible demonic energy surrounding him, one could easily believe he was a direct disciple of some prestigious sect.

But those eyes… those eyes, as deep as an ancient, icy pool, lacked the passion and impulsiveness of youth, only a chilling indifference and a faint hint of weariness, as if nothing in the world was worth a second glance.

“This is… Ning Zhi?”

Yao Chen murmured to himself, his voice trembling slightly, a tremor he himself didn’t even notice.

He instinctively clenched his fists, his nails digging into his palms, using pain to suppress the fear in his heart.

He had heard of Ning Zhi’s terror.

From the battle at Yunxian City to the destruction of his divine power by fire, everything told him that this young man was not someone he could afford to provoke.

But hearing about him was one thing, seeing him in person was another.

That aura, that oppressive force that even the protective mountain array couldn’t block, reminded him of the legendary powerful beings of ancient times.

That was a power that transcended everything, a despair that left no room for resistance.

He had lived for tens of thousands of years, believing he had seen all the strong in the world, but now he realized that before true power, everything he was so proud of was nothing but the arrogance of a frog in a well.

“Hall Master, what do we do?”

A guardian elder approached, his voice trembling, cold sweat beading on his forehead.

Yao Chen took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing his fear, and said in a deep voice, “Stay calm, don’t act rashly. Activate the protective mountain array at full power, all elders to your positions, inject spiritual power into the array’s core. No one is allowed to leave the mountain gate even a step.”

“But…but what if he attacks…” The elder’s voice trembled.

“No.”

Yao Chen stared at the figure below the mountain, his tone barely maintaining composure. “If he wanted to attack, he would have done so already. What is he waiting for?”

What was he waiting for?

Yao Chen didn’t know, nor dared he guess.

But he knew that the young man standing there was like a sword hanging over his head, ready to fall at any moment.

And all he could do was pray that the sword wouldn’t fall on him.

At the foot of the mountain, Ning Zhi stood quietly, his gaze sweeping across Holy Light Peak without lingering.

Those trembling disciples of the Divine Hall, those elders and protectors on high alert, were like ants in his eyes, not worth a second glance.

His gaze passed over Holy Light Peak, over layers of mountains, and landed on a small town a hundred miles away.

There, he felt a familiar aura.

“Kai…”

Ning Zhi’s lips curled up slightly, a faint smile appearing.

The smile was very faint, almost imperceptible, but something flickered slightly deep within his eyes.

There was anticipation, fighting spirit, and a complex emotion he himself didn't even realize.

In the small town, Kai stood by the window, his gaze also fixed on the direction of Holy Light Peak.

He sensed that aura, that familiar, hateful demonic energy.

That aura was like a flame in the darkness, clearly perceptible no matter how far away.

"Ning Zhi,"

he said softly, his tone calm, but his clenched fist betrayed the turmoil within him.

His knuckles turned white, veins bulged, and even his breathing became heavy.

Yun Xi stood behind him, her expression grave: "Is it that Ning Zhi?"

Kai nodded, loosened his fist, took a deep breath, and suppressed his surging emotions.

"He's here, just in time.

" He turned around, looking at the crowd, a cold glint in his eyes. "Let's go, let's meet him."

Yun Yao was somewhat frightened, instinctively hiding behind Liu Qianqian, only revealing half her face, looking timidly at Kai.

Ming Li gripped the ghost blade in his hand, a fighting spirit flashing in his eyes, the corners of his mouth even slightly upturned.

Liu Qianqian didn’t speak, but gently grasped Ming Li’s hand. They exchanged a glance, everything understood without words.

The group left the town, transforming into streaks of light and speeding towards Holy Light Peak.

At the foot of Holy Light Peak, Ning Zhi stood with his hands behind his back, as if waiting for something.

He didn’t wait long.

A moment later, several streaks of light flew from the horizon, piercing the sky, and landed at the foot of the other side of Holy Light Peak.

As the golden light dissipated, Kai’s figure appeared.

The two stood facing each other, hundreds of feet apart.

One was enveloped in golden light, exuding a powerful dragon’s might, with the faint phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon coiled behind him. His dragon roar was deep and heavy, shaking the very air.

The other’s demonic energy surged, his murderous aura soaring to the sky. The ground beneath his feet was corroded by demonic energy, cracking inch by inch, with dark red cracks spreading outwards like a spider web.

The two completely different auras collided in mid-air, sparking invisible flames.

There was no sound, no light, yet the aftershocks of the collision slightly distorted the space within a radius of several miles, creating visible wrinkles On Holy Light Peak, Yao Chen’s pupils contracted again upon witnessing this scene.

“Kai? He’s here too?”

A sense of foreboding washed over him.

Ning Zhi was already a headache enough; now, with Kai, capable of killing a True Immortal with a single palm strike, what if these two joined forces…

No.

Yao Chen keenly sensed that the atmosphere between Kai and Ning Zhi wasn't that of allies.

It was a deep-seated hostility, an irreconcilable grudge, so intense that he could clearly sense it even through the protective mountain array.

"They… are enemies?"

A thought flashed through Yao Chen's mind, the fear in his eyes gradually fading, replaced by a hint of anticipation and a cunning, shrewd calculation.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

If he could use Kai to restrain Ning Zhi, or use Ning Zhi to eliminate Kai, either outcome would be entirely beneficial to the Divine Hall.

If both were severely injured, even better; he could reap the benefits and eliminate both of his greatest threats in one fell swoop.

He suppressed his calculations, his gaze fixed intently on the foot of the mountain, a slight smirk playing on his lips.

At the foot of the mountain, Ning Zhi looked at Kai, his smile deepening.

"Kai, we meet again."

His tone was relaxed and casual, as if greeting an old friend, even tinged with a hint of leisure. "Your injuries are healed? Not bad, faster than I expected."

Kai stared at him, his eyes filled with hatred and murderous intent, his gaze like two sharp blades, wishing he could tear Ning Zhi to pieces.

“Ning Zhi, where is Yuqi?”

He cut to the chase, his voice icy, each word uttered as if squeezed from between his teeth.

Ning Zhi smiled, a smile tinged with amusement, mockery, and an indescribable meaning.

“Yuqi? She’s my senior sister, naturally she’s by my side. What, you want to see her? Want to see her stab you a few more times with that fire sword?”

Kai clenched his fists, his knuckles white, his nails digging deep into his palms, blood dripping from between his fingers.

“What did you do to Yuqi? Why doesn’t she remember me?”

Ning Zhi tilted his head, his tone flippant, but a cold glint flashed in his eyes. “I didn’t do anything. She just… finally woke up. No longer blinded by a mortal ant like you, she found her true self. You should be happy for her, after all, she’s finally rid of you, this burden.”

Kai’s eyes almost spit fire, the golden dragon energy around him surging violently, like a raging dragon.

“Ning Zhi, I don’t care what you’re planning, but let me tell you, I will definitely help Yuqi regain her memories. Everything you’ve placed on her, I will repay a hundredfold,” Kai roared.

Ning Zhi shook his head and sighed, looking at him like he was looking at a stubborn child, with a mixture of pity and disdain.

“Kai, you’re still so naive. Do you think that just because she remembers you, anything will change? Do you really think those so-called feelings

between you are that important?” He paused, his gaze turning icy, like a frozen wasteland, devoid of any warmth.

“In the face of absolute power, feelings are nothing but a joke. You can’t even beat me, so what will you use to protect her? What will you use to retrieve her memories?”

Ning Zhi’s words were like sharp blades piercing Kai’s body.

Kai fell silent.

He slowly raised his right hand, his five fingers forming a loose fist.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword appeared out of thin air, its blade as black as ink, covered with fine golden dragon patterns. The dragon patterns seemed to live on the blade, emitting a deep sword hum.

That sword hum carried the majesty of the dragon race, the arrogance of the Dragon Emperor, and a resolute determination to fight to the death.

The sword trembled slightly, as if responding to its master’s anger.

“Then let me see just how much skill you’ve gained.”

Before the words were finished, he took a step forward.

This step, seemingly ordinary, caused the ground within a hundred-zhang radius to shatter the instant his foot touched the ground!

Debris was blasted into the air, only to be pulverized by the raging dragon energy in the next second.

Golden light surged, like a second sun rising beneath Holy Light Peak, the blinding light causing the disciples on the peak to instinctively close their eyes.

A dragon’s roar shook the heavens.

It was no longer the low murmur of a phantom, but a true dragon's howl!

The phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon burst forth from behind Kai, its hundred-zhang-tall golden body coiled in mid-air, its dragon eyes like torches, its dragon might vast and overwhelming, causing the entire protective array of Holy Light Peak to tremble violently.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword, carrying overwhelming sword intent, slashed down towards Ning Zhi!

This sword strike contained all his power.

His cultivation at the peak of the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm erupted completely at this moment, without any reservation.

The sword light transformed into a hundred-foot-long golden beam, like a bolt of lightning descending from the sky, tearing through the void. Wherever it passed, space was cleaved into a dark rift, emitting a piercing tearing sound.

A hint of admiration flashed in Ning Zhi's eyes, quickly replaced by an even stronger fighting spirit.

He raised his hand and threw a punch.

This punch, seemingly casual, caused the world to change color the instant his fist was thrown!

Countless demonic energies surged from all directions, condensing into a massive black vortex before his fist.

The vortex spun faster and faster, swallowing up the surrounding air, light, and even sound, turning into a deathly darkness.

The fist's energy, as black as ink, erupted from the center of the vortex!

"Boom—!"

The fist and sword collided, unleashing a deafening roar.

The sound could no longer be described as merely “loud.”

The entire area within a hundred miles lost its sound at that moment—not that there was no sound, but the sound was so loud that it exceeded the limits of what the ears could bear.

Everyone’s ears were left with only a buzzing blankness, and even their thoughts froze for a moment.

A terrifying shockwave swept outwards from the point of impact, turning the ground upside down as if plowed by a giant plow. Soil, rubble, and vegetation were all flung into the air, only to be shredded into pieces by the violent energy.

The protective array of Holy Light Peak trembled violently from the shockwave, its golden shield rippling like waves crashing against a lake after a boulder, one after another, without ceasing.

Kai staggered back three steps, each step leaving a footprint over a foot deep in the ground, the edges of the footprints scorched black by the intense heat, emitting wisps of smoke.

Ning Zhi remained motionless, but a tear had been ripped in his sleeve by sword energy.

A gentle breeze stirred, causing the torn fabric to flutter softly, revealing a lean yet powerful wrist beneath.

He glanced down and a smile played on his lips.

In that smile were surprise, admiration, and a hint of… long-lost excitement.in the air, like crumpled silk. “Interesting.”

These four words came out of his mouth with a hint of nonchalance, but those who knew him knew that when he said this, he was truly serious.

Kai didn’t speak.

He knew that the previous sword strike was just a test. He took

a deep breath, and the golden dragon bloodline within him boiled completely, the dragon blood surging in his veins, as hot as magma.

He could feel every inch of his muscle burning, every bone trembling—the Dragon Emperor’s bloodline responding to his will.

He attacked again.

This time, it was no longer a test.

The sword light was like a rainbow, continuous and unending.

The first sword strike transformed into a golden dragon, baring its fangs and claws, lunging towards Ning Zhi. The dragon’s

mouth opened wide, its fangs bared, as if it wanted to devour him, man and soul.

Ning Zhi dodged to the side, and with a backhand punch, slammed into the dragon’s head, blasting the dragon into a shower of golden light.

The second sword followed immediately, its tip aimed directly at Ning Zhi’s throat.

This sword strike was incredibly fast, so fast that even the sword light couldn’t leave a trace in the air, so fast that the elders at the peak of the Upper Immortal Realm on Holy Light Peak couldn’t even see the sword’s trajectory.

Ning Zhi raised his hand, two fingers precisely pinching the sword tip.

The sound of metal clashing rang out, sparks flying everywhere. Where his fingers touched the sword tip, the air was compressed into a visible, transparent sphere, emitting a piercing buzz.

The third sword, the fourth sword, the fifth sword…

Kai's attacks were like a storm, each sword faster and more ruthless than the last.

He didn't need any fancy moves, just sword strikes, each one filled with deep hatred and a relentless determination to fight to the death, relentlessly attacking Ning Zhi.

Each sword strike contained earth-shattering power, each one enough to flatten a mountain.

Wherever the sword light passed, the ground was plowed with trenches several meters deep, and the air was filled with a scorching aura, the aftereffects of the collision between sword energy and demonic energy.

Ning Zhi neither dodged nor evaded, meeting Kai's attacks head-on with punch after punch.

His fist techniques were simple and unadorned, without any fancy variations, yet each punch was terrifyingly precise.

No matter the angle from which Kai's sword thrust, no matter how fast it was, his fists always struck the sword precisely, neutralizing Kai's attacks.

The two grew faster and faster.

So fast that the disciples on Holy Light Peak couldn't even see their movements, only two golden and black streaks of light colliding wildly, each collision unleashing a deafening roar.

Golden light and demonic energy intertwined, dyeing the entire sky an eerie dark gold.

So fast that even the True Immortal Realm elders could barely catch afterimages.

Their eyes widened, their faces filled with horror, unable to believe that this was a battle between two Upper Immortal Realm cultivators.

This level of combat was top-tier even among True Immortal Realm cultivators.

Ning Zhi was also capable of fighting beyond his level; although he was currently only at the ninth rank of Upper Immortal Realm, he could truly dominate and instantly kill a second-rank True Immortal Realm cultivator.

The clash between sword light and fist energy grew increasingly fierce and intense.

In just a few breaths, the two had exchanged hundreds of blows.

Each collision unleashed a terrifying shockwave, blasting the surrounding ground into craters, leaving no intact patch of ground within a radius of several miles.

Debris was blasted into the air, only to be pulverized by the next shockwave.

Dust billowed, obscuring the sky, but the dust was instantly vaporized by the violent energy the moment it approached the center of their battle, leaving not a trace.

On Holy Light Peak, Yao Chen watched this scene, his face growing increasingly grim, the veins on his hand gripping the railing bulging.

“These two… are monsters.”

He had originally thought that Kai’s ability to kill the Qingxuan Sect Master with a single palm strike was already his limit.

But now he realized that Kai’s strength was far more terrifying than he had imagined.

That terrifying fighting instinct, that bloodline power that grew stronger with each battle, was something the Qingxuan Sect Master could never match.

And Ning Zhi was even more unfathomable.

Having fought Kai for so long, he was still completely at ease, even having the energy to observe his surroundings.

This strength, this composure, filled him with dread.

What alarmed him even more was that although the two were fighting fiercely, neither was using their full strength.

They seemed to be testing each other, probing each other's limits, searching for weaknesses.

"Hall Master, should we..." a guardian elder asked in a low voice, his eyes filled with anxiety.

Yao Chen raised his hand to stop him, a glint of light flashing in his eyes: "No rush, let them fight. It's best if they both suffer heavy losses, then we can reap the benefits."

He paused, then added: "Pass down the order, all elders prepare to attack immediately once they are exhausted. Neither of these two can be spared."

The guardian elder nodded and turned to relay the order.

At the foot of the mountain, the battle between Kai and Ning Zhi continued.

The two fought from the ground to mid-air, and then back to the ground.

Golden light and demonic energy intertwined, sword intent and fist energy collided, each move enough to instantly kill a True Immortal Realm Second Grade expert.

Kai's sword strikes grew faster and more ruthless.

His eyes were no longer merely observing Ning Zhi's movements, but sensing his every action, every flow of demonic energy within him.

The golden dragon patterns on the Dragon-Slaying Sword shone brighter, as if about to leap from the blade.

The sword's cry grew more rapid and piercing, responding to its master's will, burning with all its power.

Ning Zhi's punches grew heavier.

His fists were covered in a layer of black demonic flames, not ordinary flames, but condensed from the purest demonic energy, so hot that even space itself was slightly distorted by the heat.

Each punch left a dark trail in the air that lingered for a long time.

"Boom—!"

Another violent collision.

Kai was blasted back dozens of feet, his feet carving deep furrows in the ground, his hands numb, the Dragon-Slaying Sword nearly slipping from his grasp.

A trickle of blood escaped from the corner of his mouth, and the golden light around him dimmed slightly.

Ning Zhi took three steps back, regaining his footing, his chest rising and falling slightly.

His black clothes had several cuts from the sword energy, revealing lean yet powerful muscles underneath.

He didn't pursue, but coldly stared at Kai. "Admit defeat, Kai. You are no match for me now. If you continue, you will die."

Kai steadied himself, wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, and smiled.

In that smile, there was no fear, no retreat, only an indomitable fighting spirit.

“Admit defeat? Ning Zhi, when have you ever seen me admit defeat?”

He took a deep breath, and the dragon blood within him boiled once more.

He could feel that in those hundreds of moves, the bottleneck that had stagnated for so long was beginning to loosen.

That was the threshold of the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, the breakthrough opportunity he had been searching for.

Chapter 6251 - 6260

He gripped the Dragon-Slaying Sword tightly and charged forward again.

This time, his sword was faster, more ruthless, and more decisive.

Yunxi stood at a distance, watching the battle, her brows furrowing deeper and deeper.

She could see that although Kai fought fiercely and relentlessly, Ning Zhi clearly still had strength to spare.

Every attack Kai launched was precisely neutralized by Ning Zhi; every burst of energy from Kai was calmly dealt with by Ning Zhi.

If this continued, Kai would eventually be exhausted, and then it would be a matter of life and death.

She gripped her sword tightly, her ghostly energy surging around her, preparing to intervene.

“Yunxi, don’t.”

Kai’s voice suddenly came, his tone firm and unquestionable, “This is between him and me, don’t interfere.”

Yunxi bit her lip, her eyes filled with resentment, but ultimately she didn’t move.

She knew Kai’s temperament.

When he said he didn’t want her to interfere, he really meant it.

If she forced her way in, Kai wouldn’t be grateful; instead, he would be angry.

This was his pride, and also his stubbornness.

The battle continued.

Kai fought with increasing ferocity, his golden dragon bloodline boiling to its limit.

He felt like a piece of steel thrown into a furnace, being forged and tempered by fire. Every strike carried the resolute determination of burning life itself. The

dragon patterns on the Dragon-Slaying Sword shone brightly, the entire sword emitting a blinding golden light, as if it might explode at any moment.

Every line on the blade pulsed and burned, the divine weapon, passed down for countless years, responding to its master’s will.

Ning Zhi gradually abandoned his frivolous expression, a hint of solemnity appearing in his eyes.

He could sense that Kai’s strength was still increasing during the battle, seemingly without limit.

Each strike was heavier than the last, each attack more ferocious than the last.

This terrifying talent of growing stronger with each battle filled Ning Zhi with dread.

“This guy…”

A trace of resentment flashed through Ning Zhi’s mind.

He had given so much.

He fell into the demonic path, enduring the pain of demonic backlash;

he devoured the cultivation of countless powerful beings, bearing sins he could never wash away;

he abandoned his former self, becoming an existence even he himself was unfamiliar with.

All of this was what earned him his current strength.

But what about Kai?

He had just reached the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, yet his combat power was no less than his.

What gave him the right?

What gave him the right to always be one step ahead of him?

A ruthless glint flashed in Ning Zhi’s eyes.

“Kai, you are indeed very strong,” he said coldly, “but not enough.”

Before his words had even finished, the demonic energy around him surged violently.

That demonic energy was no longer the faint, almost imperceptible form it had been before, but rather erupted from his body like a volcanic eruption, blotting out the sky and dyeing the entire sky black.

Within the demonic energy, faint cries of ghosts and wolves could be heard, the resentment left behind by the powerful beings he had devoured, the sins he bore.

He threw a punch.

This punch was unlike any of his previous punches.

The fist energy was as black as ink, but it was no longer simply black.

Within that inky blackness, a dark red light swirled, countless twisted faces wailed, and a terrifying power capable of destroying everything coalesced.

It was his all-out attack, a strike powerful enough to level a mountain.

Kai gritted his teeth and swung his sword to meet it. He knew he couldn't withstand this punch, but he couldn't retreat.

Once he retreated, his momentum would dissipate, and there would be no chance to turn the tide.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword let out a mournful cry, as if it too knew this was the final collision.

"Boom—!"

This strike was ten times more powerful than any before.

The golden light and demonic energy exploded simultaneously upon collision, transforming into a visible shockwave that spread outwards at supersonic speeds.

Wherever the shockwave passed, the ground was ripped apart, rocks were pulverized, and the air was compressed into a tangible mass, emitting a piercing shriek.

The protective array of Holy Light Peak trembled violently under this attack, and countless cracks appeared on the golden shield, like an eggshell about to shatter.

The spirit stones in the array's core were instantly drained of all their spiritual power, turning into grayish-white powder. Dozens of elders maintaining the grand formation simultaneously coughed up blood and collapsed to the ground.

Kai was blasted away like a golden meteor, crashing heavily onto the ground hundreds of feet away.

The impact created a crater several feet deep, filled with scorched earth and shattered rocks.

He struggled to stand, but every bone in his body groaned and every muscle trembled.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword was stuck in the ground beside him, its light dimmed to a minimum, emitting a faint whimper.

Blood seeped from his mouth, nostrils, and ears—a sign of internal organ injury.

He knelt on one knee, gasping for breath, his vision blurring.

Ning Zhi fared no better.

He was forced back more than ten feet by the recoil, his feet carving two deep furrows in the ground.

His black clothes were torn in several places by the sword energy, one of which even grazed his arm, blood dripping from his fingertips.

He glanced down at his wound, a flicker of surprise in his eyes.

How long had it been since he'd been injured?

Since falling into the demonic path, since gaining his current power, he hadn't tasted the bitterness of injury in a long time.

"Kai…"

he murmured, his tone tinged with complexity.

On Holy Light Peak, Yao Chen watched this scene, a glint of light in his eyes.

The opportunity had arrived.

Kai was severely injured, and Ning Zhi had also expended considerable energy.

This was the perfect moment for him to strike.

If he could eliminate both of them now, the Divine Hall could completely remove two major threats and rest easy from then on.

He pondered: Kai had a grudge against the Divine Hall; keeping him alive would only bring trouble sooner or later.

Although Ning Zhi seemed uninterested in the Divine Hall, who knew if he might change his mind?

Rather than waiting for Ning Zhi to free up his hands, it's better to act now, help Ning Zhi deal with Kai first, and then find an opportunity to strike at Ning Zhi.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend; Ning Zhi surely understands this principle.

As long as he shows sufficient sincerity, Ning Zhi shouldn't refuse.

“Pass down the order to activate the mountain-protecting formation,” Yao Chen said in a deep voice.

The guardian elder was shocked: “Hall Master, what are you doing?”

Yao Chen didn’t answer. With a flash, he led several True Immortal Realm elders away from the mountain-protecting formation and flew towards the battlefield.

Yun Xi was the first to spot them, shouting sharply, “Kai, be careful!”

Kai was struggling to stand up from the pit. Hearing Yun Xi’s warning, he tried to retreat, but it was too late.

Yao Chen struck out with a palm.

The golden palm print, carrying the terrifying power of a True Immortal Realm expert, descended like a mountain from the sky, aiming straight for Kai’s back.

This palm strike was as fast as lightning, extremely ruthless, and showed no mercy. Wherever the palm print passed, the air was compressed into a tangible form, emitting a piercing shriek.

Caught off guard, Kai barely managed to dodge the fatal blow, but was struck on the shoulder by the palm strike. “Bang!”

The sound of bones cracking was clearly audible.

His shoulder caved in instantly, and he was sent flying like a kite with a broken string, crashing heavily to the ground dozens of feet away, spitting out blood.

“Kai!”

Yun Xi was furious, drawing her sword to charge at Yao Chen, but Kai stopped her with a raised hand.

Kai struggled to his feet, his left arm hanging limply at his side, the bones in his shoulder shattered, every movement causing excruciating pain.

He looked at Yao Chen, his eyes filled with coldness, but a mocking smile curled at the corner of his mouth. “The head of the Divine Hall? Is this how your Divine Hall behaves? Taking advantage of someone in distress?”

Yao Chen’s expression remained unchanged as he calmly said, “There’s no need to follow any rules when dealing with an arrogant fool like you. You destroyed my Holy Light Domain’s Holy Pure Sect and insulted the dignity of my Divine Race; you deserve to die.”

He turned to Ning Zhi, his face instantly plastered with a smile, and cupped his hands, saying, “Senior Ning Zhi, I am Yao Chen, the head of the Divine Hall. I

have long admired your name, and meeting you today, I can see it is indeed well-deserved. Senior has a grudge against Kai, and so do I.

I am willing to lend you a hand to deal with this fiend. As the saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. What do you say, Senior?”

Ning Zhi looked at him without speaking.

His gaze was terrifyingly calm, as if he were looking at a dead man.

Yao Chen was overjoyed, thinking Ning Zhi was considering it, and quickly continued, “Senior, the Divine Hall has been operating in the Holy Domain of Light for tens of thousands of years, with a profound foundation. If we can join forces, the Divine Hall is willing to provide full assistance to you in your future endeavors in the Holy Domain of Light. Whether it’s resources, intelligence

, or manpower, please don’t hesitate to ask.” He paused, then added, “Senior, rest assured, I have no other intentions than to sincerely wish to befriend you. This Kai is ruthless and indiscriminately kills innocent

people; everyone has the right to punish him. It is perfectly reasonable for me to join forces with you, Senior."

Yao Chen spoke eloquently, his eyes full of expectation.

In his mind, Ning Zhi had no reason to refuse.

The Divine Hall was one of the oldest forces in the Holy Domain of Light; with the Divine Hall's assistance, Ning Zhi's actions in the Holy Domain of Light would be much more convenient.

Moreover, he had taken the initiative to show goodwill, adopting such a humble posture; Ning Zhi wouldn't refuse him.

But he was wrong.

Ning Zhi looked at him and suddenly smiled.

The smile was faint, yet it carried undisguised mockery and disdain, as if looking at a clown.

"Yao Chen?"

he repeated the name softly, his tone playful and somewhat nonchalant. "You just said, 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'?"

Yao Chen nodded hastily, his face beaming. "Exactly, exactly. Senior has a grudge against Kai, and I also have a grudge against Kai. It's only natural for us to join forces."

Ning Zhi shook his head, looking at him like he was looking at an ignorant child.

"Yao Chen, haven't you made a mistake?"

He stepped forward slowly, each step leaving a deep footprint in the ground. The soil around the footprints was corroded by demonic energy, instantly turning into charred powder.

“You think you’re worthy to be my friend?” Ning Zhi’s face was full of sarcasm.

Yao Chen’s smile froze instantly, as if a bucket of ice water had been poured over him.

Ning Zhi continued, “Your Divine Hall, claiming to be the righteous path, secretly captures demonic cultivators and rogue cultivators, conducting those shameful bloodline experiments. For your own selfish gain, you turn living people into monsters, letting them die in agony. This behavior is even worse than that of the demon race.”

His voice wasn’t loud, but every word was like a hammer blow to Yao Chen’s heart.

“With your kind of trash, you dare to talk to me about cooperation? You dare to call yourselves ‘enemies of enemies’?” Ning Zhi’s mockery deepened.

Yao Chen’s face turned pale, cold sweat pouring down his forehead. He hurriedly said, “Senior, there must be some misunderstanding! Our Divine Hall…”

“Misunderstanding?”

Ning Zhi sneered, interrupting him, “I saw it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears. You call that a misunderstanding?”

He raised his right hand, and a wisp of black demonic flame quietly appeared in his palm.

The demonic flame was small, but it emitted a chilling temperature, distorting and scorching the surrounding air.

“How many demonic cultivators has your Divine Hall captured? How many people have you killed? Those demonic cultivators you captured, those rogue cultivators you used as experimental subjects, their wronged souls are still wailing in that dense forest. Do you think I don’t know?”

Yao Chen trembled all over, subconsciously taking a step back, his voice changing tone: “Senior, I… I’m doing this for the future of the Divine Race… If we don’t become stronger, the Divine Hall will eventually follow in the footsteps of the Divine Temple…”

“The future of the Divine Race?”

Ning Zhi interrupted him again, his eyes full of disdain.

“Do you think I don’t know what you’re planning? You want to use me to deal with Kai, and then reap the benefits after we’ve both been weakened.

Or, you want to use my influence to strengthen your Divine Hall, and then find an opportunity to kick me aside. Yao Chen, I can see through your scheme at a glance.”

Yao Chen’s face changed drastically, his lips trembling as he tried to explain, but Ning Zhi didn’t give him the chance.

“Yao Chen, the worst thing you could do was treat me like a fool.” Ning Zhi’s voice was terrifyingly calm, but beneath that calm was a killing intent capable of destroying the heavens and the earth.

“You think I’d cooperate with you? You’re not even worthy to carry my shoes,”

Ning Zhi sneered.

Yao Chen finally panicked, completely panicked.

His legs went weak, almost kneeling down, his voice trembling as he pleaded, “Senior, I had no such intention! I just… I just…”

Ning Zhi wouldn’t listen to his nonsense.

He raised his hand and struck out with his palm.

The black demonic flames that had been churning in his palm suddenly erupted!

It wasn't the casual flame he'd used against the divine power before, but a true, all-out world-destroying flame.

The demonic flames spewed from his palm, initially just a thin pillar of fire, but in an instant, the pillar of fire expanded to tens of feet thick, transforming into a ferocious black fire dragon, baring its fangs and claws as it pounced on Yao Chen!

Wherever the fire dragon passed, space was torn open with a huge rift, revealing the pitch-black void within.

The spatial fragments at the edge of the rift melted and evaporated in the demonic flames, emitting a piercing shriek.

A deep trench, several meters deep, was scorched into the ground. The soil at the edge of the trench melted under the intense heat, turning into dark red magma that bubbled and bubbled.

Yao Chen was horrified and desperately channeled all the spiritual power within his body.

His holy light shield was like paper before the demonic flames, torn to shreds the moment it touched him.

He summoned his protective artifact, the golden mirror that had been with him for thousands of years, but it only lasted for less than a breath in the demonic flames before shattering into countless fragments.

He turned to flee, but the fire dragon was too fast, so fast that he didn't even have time to react.

The demonic flames instantly devoured his protective holy light, his physical body, and his soul. "No—!"

Yao Chen let out a bloodcurdling scream, his voice filled with resentment, confusion, and despair.

He died without understanding why Ning Zhi would kill him.

He was clearly helping Ning Zhi, clearly wanting to cooperate with him, clearly having lowered his stance and abandoned his dignity, so why…

The demonic flames dissipated.

Yao Chen's body turned to ashes, vanishing into the world.

The elders who had followed Yao Chen didn't even have time to scream before being engulfed by the demonic flames and instantly killed.

Their bodies burned in the demonic flames for less than a breath before completely turning to nothingness, leaving not even bones.

But the demonic flames didn't stop there.

After devouring Yao Chen, the fire dragon continued forward, crashing directly into the protective array of Holy Light Peak.

Boom—!

The entire Holy Light Peak trembled.

The protective array, strengthened by countless ancestors of the divine halls over tens of thousands of years, was like paper before Ning Zhi's demonic flames, instantly torn open with a huge gap.

The golden light shield melted and evaporated rapidly under the scorching demonic flames, turning into countless golden specks, like a golden rain.

Cracks spread outwards from the breach, dense and numerous, like a spider web.

In just a few breaths, the entire formation collapsed, the golden light shield completely dissipated, revealing the trembling Holy Light Peak within.

The buildings on the mountain swayed precariously in the aftershocks of the demonic flames, countless palaces and pavilions collapsed with a deafening roar, debris flying everywhere, and dust billowing.

The disciples of the Divine Hall scattered and fled, their cries, screams, and pleas for mercy mingling together, echoing throughout the entire mountain.

Ning Zhi withdrew his hand, looking at the scene before him with a calm expression, as if he had just done something insignificant.

The entire scene was deathly silent.

On Holy Light Peak, the surviving disciples of the Divine Hall collapsed to the ground, trembling all over, lacking even the courage to flee.

They looked at the black-clad figure at the foot of the mountain as if looking at an invincible demon god.

Yun Xi looked at Ning Zhi with fear in her eyes, instinctively shielding Kai behind her.

Ming Li gripped his Ghost Blade tightly, standing in front of Liu Qianqian, his palms sweating profusely.

Yun Yao hid behind Kai, trembling all over, unable to utter a word.

Kai calmly looked at Ning Zhi, a complex expression flashing in his eyes.

Ning Zhi turned to Kai, “What, are you surprised?”

Kai didn’t answer.

Ning Zhi said indifferently, “People like Yao Chen deserve to die. They claim to be righteous, but behind the scenes they do despicable things. Although I’m not a good person, at least I despise this kind of scum.”

He paused, his gaze turning icy.

“That’s enough for today. We’ll fight again when we have another chance.”

With that, he turned and transformed into a black streak of light, disappearing into the distance.

The streak of light tore through the sky, leaving a long gash in the clouds that took a long time to heal.

Ning Zhi wasn’t stupid. He knew that in a life-or-death situation, Yun Xi would definitely intervene. With Kai and Yun Xi joining forces, he

would be no match. Furthermore, Ning Zhi wasn’t worried about Kai running away. As long as Su Yuqi was with him, Kai wouldn’t give up.

Ning Zhi even wanted to see Kai die at Su Yuqi’s hands.

Kai stood there, watching Ning Zhi’s departing figure, speechless for a long time.

Yun Xi walked to his side and whispered, “This Ning Zhi… who exactly is he?”

Kai was silent for a moment before slowly speaking.

“A madman.”

He turned around and looked towards Holy Light Peak.

That once majestic and sacred mountain now had its protective array broken, most of its palaces and pavilions collapsed, and disciples of the

Divine Hall were fleeing everywhere. It no longer resembled a sacred place.

“Let’s go, I still have things to discuss with the Divine Hall.”

He strode towards Holy Light Peak.

Although his left arm still hung limply at his sides, although blood still clung to the corner of his mouth, and although every step aggravated his wounds, his back stood ramrod straight, like a drawn sword.

Yun Xi followed behind him, and Ming Li and Liu Qianqian also caught up.

Yun Yao wiped away her tears, mustered her courage, and followed as well.

The five figures headed towards the dilapidated mountain peak.

Kai quickly found a guardian elder trying to escape inside the ruined palace of the shrine!

Upon seeing Kai approach, the guardian elder knelt down with a thud, weeping bitterly.

“Grandpa, spare me! Grandpa, spare me…” This guardian elder had witnessed Kai’s strength and was already terrified.

“Do me a favor now, and I’ll let you go,”

Kai said to the guardian elder.

“Grandpa, just say it, I’ll do anything…”

the guardian elder nodded repeatedly.

Kai took out the soul crystal containing the remnant souls of Musa and her husband and said, “This is a soul crystal refined by the temple. There

are two remnant souls inside. I know that your temple has the ability to release the remnant souls inside the soul crystal and make them directly form a soul and then restore their physical bodies." Hearing Kai's words, the guardian elder was slightly taken aback.

His kneeling body trembled violently, cold sweat mixed with dust dripping from his forehead, leaving dark streaks on his face.

His name was Zhou Yuanlang, a guardian elder of the Divine Hall for three thousand years, his cultivation barely touching the threshold of the True Immortal Realm. He was usually a respected figure in the Divine Hall.

But at this moment, he didn't even have the courage to look Kai in the eye.

He subconsciously swallowed.

The Divine Hall did indeed possess this secret technique.

It was one of the most core inheritances of the Divine Hall for tens of thousands of years—the Soul Return Technique.

Through special means, it released the remnant soul sealed within the soul crystal, then used the unique bloodline power of the divine race to reshape its physical body.

This secret technique was extremely complex, requiring specific arrays, precious materials, and at least three elders at the True Immortal Realm level or above to perform the technique together.

Moreover, the success rate was not high.

But he dared not deny it.

Kai's eyes told him that if he said "no," his head would be separated from his body in the next instant.

“Yes…yes.”

Zhou Yuanlang nodded repeatedly, his voice trembling. “The Divine Hall does indeed possess this secret technique, called the Soul Return Technique. However…it requires a specific place to cast…”

“What place?” Kai pressed.

Zhou Yuanlang hesitated for a moment, then gritted his teeth and said, “In the forbidden area behind the Divine Hall…there is an ancient Soul Return Formation there, the only place in the entire Holy Light Domain where the remnant soul of the Soul Crystal can be safely released.

Ordinary formations that forcibly release the Soul Crystal will cause the remnant soul to dissipate the moment it is released; only that formation can guarantee the integrity of the remnant soul…”

Kai put the Soul Crystal back into his pocket and said coldly, “Lead the way.”

Zhou Yuanlang shuddered, a barely concealed strange light flashing in his eyes, but it was quickly covered by fear.

“Yes, yes, yes…Grandpa, come with me…”

He turned around and walked towards the back of Holy Light Peak, his steps faltering, his back looking extremely disheveled.

Yun Xi walked to Kai’s side and said in a low voice, “This person is not right.”

Kai nodded slightly: “I know.”

Of course he knew.

Zhou Yuanlang agreed too quickly, and his attitude was too submissive.

Even if someone who had been an elder in the Divine Hall for thousands of years was afraid of death, he shouldn't have so readily betrayed the sect's core secrets.

Unless he had other plans.

"Then why are you going with him?" Yun Xi frowned.

Kai looked at Zhou Yuanlang's back and said calmly, "He has his plans, and I have my methods. My friend and his wife's remnant souls won't last much longer; I can't wait."

Yun Xi stopped speaking, only gripping her sword tightly, her eyes filled with even greater vigilance.

Ming Li, holding Liu Qianqian's hand, walked at the very back, his Ghost Blade already half-drawn, ready to deal with any unexpected situation.

Yun Yao followed closely behind Kai, her face pale, but she bit her lip, not uttering a sound.

Six figures passed through the dilapidated buildings of Holy Light Peak, heading towards the back mountain.

Along the way, there were collapsed palaces and fleeing Divine Hall disciples everywhere.

When the disciples saw Kai and his group, they screamed and scattered as if they had seen ghosts; no one dared to stop them.

The patriarch of the Divine Hall, Yao Chen, was dead; the protective array of the mountain was broken; the elders were either dead or had fled. This sacred land, which had once dominated the Holy Domain of Light for hundreds of thousands of years, was now nothing more than a toothless tiger, all show and no substance.

Zhou Yuanlang led them through ruins and through a dark mountain tunnel, finally arriving at the entrance of a valley shrouded in thick fog.

“This is it,”

Zhou Yuanlang stopped, pointing into the valley. “The Soul Returning Array is deep within the valley. However, it is shrouded in a restriction year-round, preventing outsiders from entering. It requires my elder’s token to activate it…”

He took out a palm-sized golden token from his robes, its surface covered with dense runes, emitting a faint glow.

“Grandpa, please wait a moment, I will activate the restriction…”

Zhou Yuanlang held the token up in front of him, chanting incantations.

The runes on the token began to light up, the golden light growing stronger until it transformed into a beam of light that shot into the thick fog.

The fog churned and slowly parted to reveal a narrow passage.

At the end of the passage, an ancient stone platform could be vaguely seen, its surface covered with intricate patterns and emitting a faint blue light.

“That’s the Soul Return Array,”

Zhou Yuanlang said, pointing to the platform with a broad smile. “Grandpa, please follow me. The spell will take a little time to cast, but it will definitely succeed…”

He then stepped into the passage first.

Kai followed, but the moment he entered, his brow furrowed sharply.

Something was wrong.

The aura in this passage… something was wrong.

An extremely strange aura emanated from the depths of the valley, containing both the holy light unique to the gods and the malevolent energy unique to the demons. These two opposing forces were forcibly mixed together, creating a distorted, chaotic, and nauseating sense of oppression.

It was like forcibly mixing oil and water; on the surface, they appeared to blend, but in reality, every drop repelled and tore at each other.

“Kai…”

Yun Xi’s voice came from behind, tinged with obvious apprehension, “There’s something wrong with this place.”

“I know.”

Kai stopped, his gaze sharp as lightning, sweeping towards the thick fog at the end of the passage.

The distorted aura grew thicker and heavier, as if something was awakening from its slumber.

Zhou Yuanlang had reached the middle of the passage when he suddenly stopped and turned around.

His expression changed.

The obsequious, servile demeanor vanished, replaced by an almost manic smugness and resentment.

“Kai, Kai, you actually dared to follow me in.”

Zhou Yuanlang’s voice no longer trembled, but instead carried a long-suppressed sense of exhilaration. “What do you think the Divine Hall is? You think I’d obediently help you? Hahahaha…”

He laughed loudly, the laughter echoing shrilly in the narrow passage. Chen

Ping looked at him calmly, without speaking.

Zhou Yuanlang suddenly raised the token in his hand and slammed it hard against the wall of the passage.

Boom—!

The entire passage shook violently, and thick fog surged in from all directions, completely blocking their escape route.

At the end of the passage, on the ancient stone platform, the intricate patterns glowed with a blinding red light, like flowing blood.

But most chilling was the heartbeat emanating from beneath the platform.

Thump.

Thump.

Thump.

The heartbeat was deep and powerful, each beat causing the ground to tremble slightly, each beat like a heavy punch to the heart.

Zhou Yuanlang retreated to the side of the platform, his smile growing increasingly sinister.

“Come forth, my clan’s most perfect masterpiece!”

His words had barely left his lips when the platform shattered with a deafening roar! Shards of stone flew, dust billowed, and a colossal figure soared into the sky from beneath the stone platform, landing heavily at the end of the passage.

As the dust settled, Kai finally saw the thing in its entirety.

It was… a humanoid monster.

Its size was enormous, over two zhang tall, its entire body covered in dark golden scales, each scale flowing with eerie blood-red patterns.

Its left half radiated a holy golden light, the holy light power unique to the divine race;

its right half, however, surged with pitch-black demonic energy, the malevolent intent unique to the demon race.

These two diametrically opposed forces clashed wildly within its body, yet were forcibly fused together by some bizarre method, making it appear like a torn and reassembled doll, twisted and mad in every way.

Its face was expressionless, or rather, its face was incapable of expressing any expression.

It wasn't a normal human face at all. The left half still retained human features, but the right half was completely twisted and deformed, with countless worm-like blood vessels bulging beneath the skin. One eye was blood-red, while the other was empty, like a lifeless object.

"This is..."

Yun Xi gasped, instinctively taking a step back.

"The only finished product of the secret fusion of the Divine Hall."

Zhou Yuanlang stood behind the monster, his voice filled with pride and resentment. "We spent ten thousand years, using thousands of divine and demonic cultivators as test subjects, to successfully create this one."

He reached out and gently patted the monster's back, his manner resembling that of someone showing off their most prized creation.

"Its body is fused with the bloodlines of twelve divine cultivators and the demonic cores of six demonic cultivators. We spent ten thousand years repeatedly adjusting and improving it to achieve its current stable state."

Zhou Yuanlang's smile grew increasingly maniacal.

"Peak of the third rank of True Immortal Realm. This is the greatest achievement of the Divine Hall in tens of thousands of years! Given enough time, it could even grow to the peak of the ninth rank of True Immortal Realm, or even break through to the legendary realm!"

He looked at Kai, his eyes full of contempt and disdain. "If it weren't for that trash Hall Master being too careless and being instantly killed by that demon Ning Zhi, as long as we release it, none of you would have escaped! Not a single one of you would have escaped!"

Kai stared at the monster, his brows furrowed.

His intuition was frantically warning him.

This thing... was indeed very strong.

The aura of the peak of the third rank of True Immortal Realm was almost tangible, pressing down on him so much that he could hardly breathe.

The distorted holy light and demonic energy intertwined, forming a strange force field that made the surrounding space unstable.

He could sense that this thing's strength far surpassed Yao Chen's.

Yao Chen was only a second-rank True Immortal Realm cultivator, and he was used to being pampered; his true combat strength might not even reach the level of a second-rank True Immortal Realm cultivator.

But this monster was different.

It was created to fight; every inch of its flesh and blood, every bone, was born for slaughter.

"Kai..."

Yun Xi's voice was soft, yet carried an unprecedented gravity, "This thing is not easy to deal with."

Kai nodded slightly and took a deep breath.

The golden dragon bloodline within him began to boil, golden dragon energy surged around him, and the Dragon Slayer Sword appeared in his palm, emitting a deep sword hum.

"It's not easy to deal with, but we have to deal with it."

His voice was calm, but his eyes were sharp as knives.

Zhou Yuanlang laughed loudly, his laughter filled with disdain and smugness.

"Deal with it? Kai, what do you have to deal with it? You can't even beat Ning Zhi, yet you dare to challenge my Divine Hall's most perfect masterpiece? Hahahaha... Kill them all!"

Before he finished speaking, the monster moved.

It made no sound, not even a breath, and charged forward silently.

But its speed was outrageous! Its

massive body, over two zhang tall, unleashed a terrifying speed completely disproportionate to its size. Like a dark golden meteor, it was enveloped in distorted holy light and demonic energy, hurtling straight towards Kai!

Wherever it passed, footprints over a foot deep were left in the ground, and ear-piercing explosions echoed in the air—sonic booms! Its speed had broken the sound barrier!

Kai's pupils contracted sharply. He held the Dragon-Slaying Sword horizontally in front of him, golden dragon energy surging wildly into the blade.

“Clang—!”

The monster’s fist slammed into the Dragon-Slaying Sword, producing a deafening metallic clang.

The power… was immense!

Kai felt as if he had been struck head-on by a mountain. He was sent flying like a kite with a broken string, crashing heavily against the wall of the passage.

The wall shattered with a deafening roar, sending debris flying and dust billowing.

His back shattered at least three feet of rock before he finally came to a stop. His hands

were numb, and the Dragon-Slaying Sword trembled violently in his grasp, its cry tinged with sorrow.

A trickle of blood escaped from the corner of his mouth; that punch had injured his internal organs.

“Such immense power…”

Kai gritted his teeth and straightened up, a look of horror flashing in his eyes.

He had already defended with all his might, but the monster’s strength still far exceeded his expectations.

A full-force attack from a peak third-grade True Immortal was indeed something a peak fourth-grade Upper Immortal couldn’t withstand.

Moreover, this monster’s true combat power was likely higher than that of an ordinary peak third-grade True Immortal cultivator.

No wonder even a legitimate divine clan like the Divine Hall secretly engaged in things that defied the laws of nature.

The monster, having landed a blow, charged forward without hesitation.

Its movements were devoid of any fancy moves or techniques; they were pure, primal, beast-like violence.

Every punch, every kick, every ramming strike carried earth-shattering power, enough to level a mountain.

Kai gritted his teeth and met the attack head-on, his Dragon-Slaying Sword transforming into a sky full of sword light, engaging the monster in fierce combat.

Golden light clashed with dark golden scales, erupting in dazzling sparks.

But Kai soon discovered a chilling fact—his sword couldn't break through the monster's defenses.

The Dragon Slayer Sword struck its scales, leaving only a shallow white mark, unable to even cut through the scales.

Each of the monster's attacks left Kai in grave danger.

"Boom!"

Another punch sent Kai flying, crashing through three stone pillars and spitting out a mouthful of blood.

His left arm, already shattered by Yao Chen's blow to the shoulder, was now even more severely injured, leaving his entire arm numb.

"Kai!"

Yun Xi could no longer restrain herself, drawing her sword and charging forward.

Her ghostly blade, imbued with a chilling aura, pierced the monster's back.

The monster didn't even turn its head, slapping back with its hand.

Yun Xi parried with her sword, but was forced back several steps by the terrifying force, her tiger's mouth split open, blood flowing freely.

"This thing's defense is too strong..."

Yun Xi gritted her teeth, "Ordinary attacks can't hurt it at all."

Kai struggled to his feet, wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth, a ruthless glint in his eyes. "Ordinary attacks won't hurt, so I'll use something extraordinary."

He took a deep breath, and the Golden Dragon bloodline within him boiled completely.

Golden dragon energy surged from his body, condensing behind him into a phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon.

The phantom was more solid than when he fought Ning Zhi, its dragon eyes blazing, its dragon might overwhelming, as if it were about to break free from the void.

The golden dragon patterns on the Dragon-Slaying Sword flickered wildly, every line on the blade burning and roaring.

This was the limit of what he could do.

He pushed the power of the Golden Dragon bloodline to its limit, pouring everything into this one sword strike.

"Yun Xi, help me restrain it!" Kai said in a deep voice.

Yun Xi didn't hesitate at all. She twirled the Ghost Blade in her hand, and the eerie ghost energy transformed into countless black chains, wrapping around the monster.

The monster was bound by the chains, letting out a low roar, and with a shake of its arms, it broke the chains inch by inch.

But this momentary pause was enough.

Kai moved.

His figure transformed into a golden streak of light, the Dragon-Slaying Sword in front of him, and he shot forward like an arrow, aiming straight for the monster's chest.

This sword strike contained all his power, all his will, and all his life.

Before the sword arrived, its intent had already reached him.

That sword intent was as chilling as winter, as sharp as a blade, tearing a dark rift in the air.

The monster seemed to sense the threat; for the first time, it let out a sound, a low, beast-like roar, filled with resentment and rage.

It clenched its fists, and the holy light and demonic energy within its body erupted simultaneously, condensing into a twisted shield in front of it.

Half of the shield was radiantly golden, and the other half was pitch black; the two diametrically opposed forces swirled wildly within it, forming an extremely eerie vortex.

"Break—!"

Kai roared, and the Dragon-Slaying Sword plunged fiercely into the vortex.

Boom—!

The moment the sword collided with the shield, a deafening roar erupted.

Golden dragon energy and twisted holy demonic energy exploded simultaneously, transforming into a terrifying shockwave that spread outwards.

The walls on both sides of the passage were torn to shreds by the shockwave, sending debris flying and dust billowing everywhere.

Numerous cracks appeared on the overhead rock face, and large chunks of rock fell from above.

Kai felt his arms, shoulders, and even the bones throughout his body groaning and trembling.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword and the shield were locked in a stalemate, neither able to advance.

The monster's power was too great; its cultivation far surpassed Kai's. Even with Kai burning his bloodline, he couldn't overpower it in strength.

"Break!"

Kai gritted his teeth, his eyes turning a deep crimson gold.

The golden dragon bloodline within him broke through its limits at this moment, and the bottleneck that had plagued him for so long shattered in this life-or-death moment!

Fifth Rank of the Upper Immortal Realm!

His aura surged instantly, golden dragon energy erupting from his body like a volcanic eruption, coalescing behind him into a more solid and majestic five-clawed golden dragon.

The light on the Dragon-Slaying Sword intensified several times over, the dragon patterns on its blade seemingly coming to life, emitting a deafening roar!

Crack—

a crack appeared on the distorted shield.

The crack spread rapidly, densely packed like a spiderweb.

“Break!”

Kai roared again, thrusting the Dragon-Slaying Sword forward with tremendous force.

Boom—!

The shield shattered, the Dragon-Slaying Sword piercing the monster’s chest with unstoppable momentum!

“Awooo—!”

The monster let out a shrill roar, its voice filled with resentment and rage.

Dark golden blood gushed from the wound, containing both golden holy light and black demonic energy, the two forces repelling each other in the air, emitting a hissing sound.

But the monster did not fall.

It frantically swung its arms, smashing towards Kai.

Kai didn’t have time to draw the Dragon-Slaying Sword, so he could only loosen his grip on the hilt and retreat.

But the monster’s fist was too fast, slamming into his chest with a resounding

“Bang!”

The sound of bones cracking was clearly audible. Kai felt at least two of his sternums break, and he flew backward like a kite with a broken string, spitting out blood .

“Kai!”

Yun Xi cried out in alarm, flashing forward to catch Kai.

But the impact was too great; she staggered back more than ten steps with Kai in her arms before barely managing to regain her balance.

The monster glanced down at the Dragon-Slaying Sword stuck in its chest, let out a low roar, reached out and gripped the blade, and yanked it out .

Dark golden blood gushed out again, but the monster seemed oblivious to the pain, casually tossing the Dragon-Slaying Sword to the ground and turning to walk towards Kai and Yun Xi.

Though its steps were unsteady, its killing intent remained undiminished.

Each step left a deep footprint in the ground, the edges of the footprints stained dark gold with blood.

“It’s not dead yet…”

Kai gritted his teeth, the excruciating pain in his chest making it almost impossible for him to breathe.

Yun Xi put him down, gripped her ghost blade tightly, and stood in front of him.

“I’ll handle this.”

Her voice was calm, but the killing intent in her eyes was intense.

The monster was getting closer and closer.

Yun Xi took a deep breath, and the ghostly energy around her surged wildly.

Behind her, a huge phantom vaguely appeared, a woman in a black robe, with long, flowing hair, a blurred face, and holding an equally enormous ghost blade in her hand.

That was her innate ghost form, her trump card cultivated for thousands of years.

“Ghost Slash.”

Yun Xi uttered two words softly, her voice low, yet like a judgment from the deepest abyss.

She drew her sword.

This sword was unlike any she had ever used before.

The ghostly energy on the ghost blade condensed to its peak at this moment, transforming into a jet-black blade of light, slashing towards the monster’s neck.

Where the blade of light passed, space was torn open with a dark rift, the edges of which emitted a piercing shriek.

Sensing a deadly threat, the monster frantically channeled its holy light and demonic energy, attempting to re-form its shield.

However, its chest was pierced by the Dragon Slayer Sword, its power greatly diminished, and the shield shattered before it could even take shape.

The blade’s edge sliced through its neck without hindrance.

“Crack.”

The sound was soft, yet clearly audible.

The monster's head flew high, dark golden blood gushing from the severed neck like a fountain.

Its body stood still for a full three breaths before crashing to the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust.

Its head rolled a few times on the ground, its twisted face still bearing the grotesque contortions of its death.

All was silent.

Yun Xi sheathed her Ghost Blade, her face paling, fine beads of sweat forming on her forehead.

This single strike had nearly exhausted most of her strength.

"Dead..."

she gasped, looking at Kai, "How are you?" Kai struggled to his feet, the excruciating pain in his chest causing cold sweat to pour down his forehead, but he still shook his head: "I won't die."

He glanced down at the monster's corpse on the ground, a complex emotion flashing in his eyes.

A fusion monster at the peak of the third rank of True Immortal Realm... If it weren't for Yun Xi's sword strike, he probably would have really died here today.

"What about Elder Shentang?"

Kai suddenly remembered something and looked up sharply.

The end of the passage was empty.

Zhou Yuanlang was gone.

“He ran away when you pierced that monster’s chest.”

Ming Li’s voice came from behind, tinged with regret, “I’ll go after him…”

Before he could finish speaking, a scream suddenly came from afar.

That voice… it was Zhou Yuanlang’s.

Kai’s heart sank, and he endured the excruciating pain in his chest, rushing towards the direction from which the voice came.

Ming Li followed closely behind.

The three of them passed through the passage and arrived at the other side of the valley, where the scene before them made Kai’s steps suddenly stop.

Zhou Yuanlang’s corpse lay on the ground, a thin line of blood on his throat, fresh blood slowly seeping from the wound.

His eyes were wide open, his face still showing terror and disbelief, as if he couldn’t believe he was dying here.

Yunxi stood beside the corpse, blood still dripping from the ghost blade in her hand.

Her expression was calm, even somewhat cold.

“He tried to run,” Yunxi said calmly. “I killed him.”

Kai was silent for a moment, then slowly said, “I… wanted to spare his life.”

Yunxi turned to look at him, a hint of confusion flashing in her eyes: “Why keep him? Keeping someone like that around is just asking for trouble.”

Kai didn’t answer.

He couldn’t say.

He couldn’t say that he had spared Zhou Yuanlang because he still needed him to control the Soul Return Array to release the remnants of Mu Sha and his wife’s souls.

But now… Zhou Yuanlang was dead.

Kai turned to look at the shattered stone platform at the end of the passage. The Soul Return Array had been completely destroyed in the battle just now; its complex patterns had shattered into countless pieces, scattered all over the ground, beyond repair.

His heart sank to the bottom.

“Kai?”

Yun Xi noticed his unusual behavior and frowned, asking, “What’s wrong?”

Kai didn’t answer, but slowly took out the soul crystal from his robes.

The two white lights within the soul crystal… dimmed even more.

Their movement became slower and slower, as if two exhausted souls were about to stop beating at any moment.

Kai’s fingers trembled slightly.

The shrine was destroyed, the Soul Returning Array was ruined, and Zhou Yuanlang was dead.

The remnant souls of Mu Sha and his wife… couldn’t be released.

“Kai?”

Yun Xi walked to his side, looking down at the soul crystal, a hint of understanding flashing in her eyes, “The remnant souls in this soul crystal… are about to dissipate?”

Kai nodded, his voice hoarse: “The Soul Returning Array of the shrine was destroyed, and Zhou Yuanlang is dead. Without the array, the remnant souls can’t be released… In a while, they will completely dissipate.”

He gripped the soul crystal tightly, his knuckles turning white, veins bulging.

Yun Xi fell silent.

Yun Yao walked over from behind and carefully tugged at Kai’s sleeve.

Her eyes were red, and her voice was soft, yet carried a resolute gentleness.

“Young Master Chen, don’t worry. The Divine Hall has been destroyed, but… there’s still the Divine Palace.”

Kai turned to look at her.

Yun Yao pursed her lips, mustered her courage, and continued, “The Divine Hall and the Divine Palace are both branches of the Divine Race. The Divine Hall has the Soul Return Technique, and the Divine Palace might have it too?

Moreover, the Divine Palace is older and more powerful than the Divine Hall, and their lineage is more complete. If anyone in this world can release the remnant soul within the Soul Crystal, it must be the Divine Palace.”

Kai’s eyes flickered slightly.

Yun Yao’s words were like a ray of light illuminating the darkness in his heart.

Yes… there was still the Divine Palace.

The Divine Race wasn't just the Divine Hall.

The Divine Temple, the Divine Hall, and the Divine Palace were collectively known as the three major branches of the Divine Race.

The Divine Temple had been destroyed by Ning Zhi, and the Divine Hall had also been destroyed by him and Ning Zhi together, but the Divine Palace still existed.

That most mysterious, oldest, and most powerful Divine Palace still existed.

"Do you know where the Divine Palace is?" Kai asked.

Yun Yao nodded, carefully choosing her words, "The location of the Divine Palace… is extremely secretive. I once saw some records in a fragment of a scroll, saying that the Divine Palace is not in the Holy Domain of Light, but in another extremely hidden place in the Fourteenth Heaven.

What that place is called, where it is, is not explicitly stated in the scroll, only mentioned in passing as 'Beyond the Heavens.'"

She paused, then added, "Moreover, there are very few tales about the Divine Palace. Many cultivators in the Fourteenth Heaven don't even believe that the Divine Palace truly exists.

Some say it's just a legend embellished by the gods, while others say the Divine Palace disappeared tens of thousands of years ago. " "They're dead," some say. "The Divine Palace has always existed, but their disciples never show their true faces, acting with extreme discretion and never participating in any conflicts within the Fourteenth Heaven."

Kai frowned. "Aren't the Divine Hall and the Divine Temple also branches of the Divine Race? They don't even know the exact location of the Divine Palace?"

Yun Yao shook her head. “Although the Divine Hall, Divine Temple, and Divine Palace are collectively known as the three major branches of the Divine Race, the Divine Palace has always operated independently, with almost no contact with the other two branches.

The Divine Hall and Divine Temple operate openly, establishing sects and recruiting disciples throughout the Fourteenth Heaven; the Divine Palace operates in the shadows, hidden from the world, detached from worldly affairs.”

Kai was silent for a moment.

This was far more troublesome than he had imagined.

He had originally thought that the Divine Palace, like the Divine Hall, was a well-known force within the Fourteenth Heaven, easily found by asking for directions.

But now he realized that the existence of the Divine Palace itself was a mystery, a mystery even those within the Divine Race themselves didn’t fully understand.

“However…”

Yun Yao suddenly remembered something, her eyes lighting up slightly. “There was a sentence on the scroll that I don’t quite remember, but it seemed to say, ‘The Divine Palace is hidden in the far north, beyond the snowfields, and only those with the right destiny can enter.’

If the record is correct, the Divine Palace should be located even deeper in the far north of the Fourteenth Heaven, farther than any place anyone has ever been.”

“The far north…” Kai murmured, repeating.

Yunxi interjected, “When I was in the Fifteenth Heaven, I heard someone mention that at the northernmost end of the Fourteenth Heaven, there’s

an ice plain called ‘Guixu,’ the edge of the Fourteenth Heaven, beyond which lies the Chaotic Void.

It’s said that a fierce wind blows across that ice plain year-round, capable of freezing souls, and even early-stage True Immortal cultivators dare not venture deep into it. If the Divine Palace is really there…”

She didn’t finish, but her meaning was clear: if the Divine Palace was truly hidden in such a place, then the danger of Kai’s journey would far exceed his imagination.

Kai carefully put the Soul Crystal back into his robes, his eyes calm and resolute.

“No matter where the Divine Palace is, I’m going.”

His tone was soft, but there was no room for negotiation.

Yunxi frowned: “I’ll go with you.” “No,” Kai shook his head. “I’ll go alone.”

Yun Xi’s brows furrowed even more. “Why?”

Kai looked into her eyes and said seriously, “The Divine Palace has always been secluded, which means they don’t want to be disturbed. If I bring too many people, it’s easy for them to misunderstand. If they think I’m going to provoke them with helpers, they probably won’t even let me in the door.”

He paused, then smiled bitterly. “Besides, the news of the destruction of the Divine Hall will reach the Divine Palace’s ears sooner or later. If they know I was one of the people who destroyed the Divine Hall, they’re already wary of me. If

I bring a large group of people to attack, they’ll definitely think I’m here to wipe out their sect.”

Yun Xi fell silent.

She understood what Kai meant.

The Divine Palace was different from the Divine Hall.

The Divine Hall was in the open, acting openly and following rules;

the Divine Palace was in the shadows, mysterious and unpredictable, acting entirely according to its own principles.

When dealing with an opponent who follows rules, you can use those rules to maneuver;

but when dealing with someone without rules, you never know what they will do.

Moreover, the Divine Palace's foundation was unfathomable.

If a real fight broke out, Kai might not win.

Even if he did, the Divine Palace would be destroyed, and the remnant souls of Mu Sha and his wife would truly have no hope left.

"But you're going alone..." Yun Xi was still worried.

"Going alone is actually safer,"

Kai said. "I'll visit as a guest, not as an enemy. Besides, with my current strength, there aren't many people in the Fourteenth Heaven who can stop me."

This was true.

After his battle with Ning Zhi, his cultivation had broken through to the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, and his Golden Dragon bloodline had become more solidified.

Although his cultivation level was still in the Upper Immortal Realm, he was confident he could fight a third-rank True Immortal Realm cultivator.

Yun Xi bit her lip, ultimately not insisting any further.

She knew Kai was right, but she couldn't suppress her worries.

"Then promise me,"

Yunxi stared into his eyes, enunciating each word clearly, "if the Divine Palace turns against you, leave immediately. Don't be reckless, don't fight head-on."

Kai nodded: "I promise you, you should also return to Yunxian City as soon as possible. With only Long Zhan and Wanqing, I'm afraid we can't hold it. Ning Zhi has gone back, and he might even bring the Demonic Dragon to attack Yunxian City."

"Okay!" Yunxi nodded.

Kai turned around and looked at the distant horizon.

That direction was the northernmost point of the Fourteenth Heaven, the unknown land called "Guixu," the place where the Divine Palace might exist.

"Senior Musha, wait a little longer,"

he said silently in his heart, "I will definitely find a way to release you."

He took a deep breath, transformed into a golden stream of light, and disappeared into the horizon.

Yunxi stood there, watching his back, motionless for a long time.

Ming Li walked to her side and said softly, "Mr. Chen is just like that, you can't stop him."

Yunxi didn’t speak, but just gripped the sword in her hand tightly.

“Let’s go too.” Her voice was calm, but a barely perceptible worry flashed in her eyes.

Kai was her greatest hope now; she was counting on him to accompany her to the Fifteenth Heaven.

“If he doesn’t return within a month… I’ll storm the Divine Palace and tear down their gates.” Princess Yunxi’s temper flared.

Ming Li: “…”

He opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but ultimately said nothing.

Forget it, this young lady’s temper is even worse than Kai’s.

Can’t afford to offend her.

…

There was no teleportation array to the far north, so Kai flew north for seven days and seven nights.

For the first three days, he could still see signs of life: scattered small towns, the caves of rogue cultivators, and the occasional passing caravan.

He asked everyone he met about the Divine Palace, but the answer was always the same: a shake of the head.

“The Divine Palace? Never heard of it.”

“That’s just ancient legend; who knows if it’s true or

not.” “Young man, have you been deceived? I’ve lived in the Fourteenth Heaven for eight thousand years and have never heard of any Divine Palace.”

By the fourth day, all signs of life had vanished.

The land beneath his feet transformed from a vast grassland into barren frozen tundra, and then from frozen tundra into an endless ice field.

The temperature plummeted so drastically that even his protective dragon aura felt the chill; his breath condensed into tiny ice crystals that fluttered to the ground.

On the fifth day, even the ice field vanished.

Beneath his feet lay a void of white, not ice, not snow, but a substance he had never seen before.

The white was like solidified light, feeling unreal underfoot, yet he wouldn't fall.

A chilling silence reigned all around; not even the wind could be heard, as if the entire world had been muted.

The aurora borealis in the sky changed from a vibrant blue-green to an eerie pale white, like a dying flame, flickering silently overhead.

Kai didn't know how far he had flown, nor where he was.

He had completely lost his bearings.

He could only rely on his intuition, flying and flying further north.

On the sixth day, he encountered his first gale.

The gale-force wind blew silently from the depths of the aurora, carrying a chill capable of freezing the soul.

When it swept past Kai's indestructible golden body, the golden scales, strong enough to withstand a full-force attack from a first-grade True Immortal, were instantly covered with fine frost. The frost spread along the scales, making a teeth-grinding "crackling" sound.

Kai's heart tightened. He activated his Golden Dragon bloodline with all his might, golden dragon energy burning fiercely on his body, barely managing to keep the gale-force wind at bay.

But his spiritual energy consumption rate instantly increased tenfold.

"This is the gale-force wind of the Ruins of Return..." Kai gritted his teeth and increased his flying speed.

He didn't know how many more such gales lay ahead, nor how long he could hold out.

But he couldn't stop, nor could he retreat.

The seventh day.

Kai's spiritual energy was already mostly depleted, and his protective dragon energy was more than half dimmer than when he set out.

His lips were cracked, and a thick layer of frost covered his brows; each breath felt like swallowing razor blades.

He was nearing his limit.

But then, he suddenly sensed something ahead.

It was an extremely faint aura, so faint as to be almost imperceptible, yet the power contained within it made his heart leap.

That aura... was alive.

Kai's spirits lifted, and with his last ounce of strength, he flew in that direction.

After flying for about two more hours, the scene before him suddenly changed.

The ethereal white expanse vanished, replaced by a vast, dark blue ice plain.

Countless enormous ice pillars stood on the ice plain, each tens of meters tall, resembling a stone forest or a natural maze.

Faint mist flowed between the ice pillars. The mist wasn't white, but an extremely thin, pale gold, radiating a faint warmth that contrasted sharply with the surrounding frigid air.

As Kai stepped into the ice pillar forest, he immediately felt the surrounding gale weaken considerably.

The pale gold mist seemed to have an insulating effect on the gale; the further he went, the weaker the gale became, until it finally disappeared completely.

His steps grew slower and heavier. His

spiritual energy was almost exhausted; his vision began to blur, and his legs felt like lead.

Just as he was about to collapse, he suddenly heard a clear, ringing bell.

The bell's sound came from the depths of the ice pillar forest, melodious and ethereal, like a mountain spring, or an ancient chant.

With each ring, the surrounding mist trembled slightly, as if in response.

Kai followed the sound.

His steps faltered, his consciousness began to blur, but his unwavering determination sustained him step by step.

Finally, he passed through the last row of ice pillars.

What he saw before him made his breath catch in his throat.

It was a lake.

A vast, circular lake, its surface as still as a mirror, reflected the pale aurora borealis overhead.

The water wasn't blue, nor black, but a deep, inky blue, as if it had melted the entire night sky into it.

In the center of the lake lay a small island.

There were no palaces, no pavilions, only a single tree.

The tree was enormous, its canopy blotting out the sun, its trunk so thick that dozens of people couldn't encircle it.

Its leaves were golden, each one like a tiny sun, radiating a warm glow.

And the golden mist rose from these leaves.

Kai stared blankly at the tree, a strange feeling welling up within him.

He felt... this tree was alive.

Not just any living plant, but a tree possessing consciousness, a soul, an ancient wisdom that transcended all things.

"You've come,"

a voice suddenly sounded behind him.

The voice was soft and gentle, like a spring breeze across a lake, like moonlight falling on a snowfield.

Her voice carried an innate coolness, yet also a strangely comforting warmth.

Kai whirled around.

A woman stood three steps behind him, silently watching him.

She wore a long, plain white dress, the hem trailing on the ice, blending seamlessly with the surrounding snow.

Her long, ink-black hair was simply styled in a bun, secured with a white jade hairpin, a few stray strands falling beside her ears, fluttering slightly in the cold wind.

Her face… Kai couldn't find the right words to describe it.

It wasn't the kind of beauty that could topple kingdoms, nor the ethereal beauty of someone untouched by worldly affairs.

Her features were delicate and aloof, her eyebrows like distant mountains, her eyes like cold stars, her lips slightly pursed, carrying a subtle sense of detachment.

But those eyes…

those eyes were too deep.

So deep that Kai felt he wasn't facing a person, but an ocean, a starry sky, an ancient world that had existed for countless millennia.

Her aura was so calm it was almost imperceptible, yet Kai's intuition screamed a warning: this person's strength was unfathomable. Stronger

than Ning Zhi.

Stronger than anyone he had ever met.

"You are…"

Kai began, his voice so hoarse he barely recognized himself.

"Isn't this the person you've been looking for?"

the woman said calmly, a slight smile playing on her lips, so faint it was almost imperceptible. “You traveled ten thousand miles north, braving the fierce winds of the Ruins of Return, venturing into the Ice Pillar Forest, all to find this place?”

Kai’s pupils constricted slightly. “You are… the Palace Master of the Divine Palace?”

The woman didn’t answer, simply gazing at him silently.

Her gaze was calm, almost cold, yet beneath that calmness, a barely concealed curiosity flowed.

“The Divine Palace is indeed here.”

She finally spoke, her voice still calm. “However… it’s been many years since anyone has been able to find this place. The last person to come here was a rogue cultivator a hundred years ago. He strayed into the Void and was severely injured by the gale, drifting to the lakeside on the verge of death. I rescued him, healed his wounds, and sent him away.”

She paused, her gaze sweeping over Kai.

“And you… are the first person to actively seek this place out.”

Kai took a deep breath, forcing his almost broken body to stand up, and clasped his hands in a salute: “I am Kai. I have come here to ask the Divine Palace for assistance.”

“Assistance?”

She repeated, a hint of amusement in her tone. “You’re quite direct. Usually, when asking for help, people would exchange pleasantries first, build rapport, and then get down to business. But you, without even a sip of water, just asked.”

Kai smiled wryly: “I don’t have much time left, and I really don’t have the leisure for pleasantries.”

He took out the Soul Crystal from his robes and held it in his palm.

The two beams of white light within the soul crystal had dimmed to their lowest point, like candles flickering in the wind, ready to be extinguished at any moment.

“This soul crystal contains two remnant souls, the souls of an old friend and his wife,” Kai’s voice was somewhat hoarse. “I heard that the Divine Palace possesses a secret technique that can release the remnant souls within soul crystals and reshape their physical bodies. I have nowhere else to turn but to come and seek an audience.”

The woman looked at the soul crystal in his palm and remained silent for a moment.

She reached out and took the soul crystal from Kai’s hand. Her fingers were long and slender, white, with a faint golden glow at the tips, creating a strange contrast with her aloof and cold demeanor.

She held the soul crystal up to her eyes, examining it closely.

The two beams of white light within the soul crystal seemed to sense something, trembling slightly and moving a little faster.

“Two remnant souls, a man and a woman, are indeed a married couple,”

the woman said calmly. “The remnant souls are relatively well-preserved, but they are too weak. If you had arrived three days later… no, two days later, these two remnant souls would have completely dissipated.”

Kai’s heart tightened suddenly: “Can they be saved?”

The woman did not answer immediately.

Her gaze shifted from the soul crystal to Kai’s face.

Something flickered slightly in her deep eyes.

There was scrutiny, consideration, and a hint of inexplicable emotion.

“I can save him,” she finally spoke, “but what will you offer in return?”

Kai was taken aback.

The woman returned the soul crystal to him, stood with her hands behind her back by the lake, her gaze fixed on the enormous golden ancient tree in the center of the lake.

“There’s no such thing as a free lunch. You begged me to save someone, so I have to accept payment. That’s the rule.”

Her tone was calm, yet undeniable. “What do you intend to offer in return?”

Kai was silent for a moment: “What do you want?”

The woman turned to look at him, a slight smile playing on her lips, a smile more genuine than before, yet even more enigmatic.

“What do you have?” the woman asked. Kai paused for a moment, then began to take stock of his possessions.

He rummaged through his storage ring, taking out each item one by one.

Spirit stones, pills, cultivation manual jade slips, several decent-grade magic artifacts, some refining materials… a jumbled mess spread out on the floor.

Then he glanced at the sleeping fire qilin, but didn’t take it out.

If the fire qilin knew that Kai intended to use it as a bargaining chip, it would probably be angry.

The woman glanced at it and gently shook her head: “The Divine Palace doesn’t lack any of these things.”

Kai frowned.

He really didn't have anything worth mentioning.

All his wealth combined, in a place like the Fourteenth Heaven, was probably less than that of an ordinary rogue cultivator.

"Then what do you want?" he asked.

The woman didn't answer, but instead slowly circled Kai, her gaze sweeping over him.

That gaze made Kai feel as if he were seen through, as if he had no secrets in front of those eyes.

"Golden Dragon bloodline..." she murmured, her voice soft, as if talking to herself, "Royal bloodline... Interesting."

She stopped and stood before Kai, looking directly into his eyes.

"I want you."

Kai: "..."

He wondered if he had misheard.

"What?"

the woman said calmly, "I said, I want you. You stay in the Divine Palace and do three things for me. In return, I will help you release those two remnant souls and rebuild their physical bodies."

Kai was silent for a moment: "What three things?"

"Haven't thought about it yet." The woman answered confidently, "I'll tell you when I've thought it through."

Kai: "..."

He took a deep breath, trying to keep his tone calm: “You mean, I’m selling myself to you, and I don’t even know what I’m supposed to do?”

The woman thought for a moment and said seriously, “You can understand it that way.”

Kai felt like he might have encountered a liar.

“How do I know you can do it?” He stared into the woman’s eyes, “How do I know you’re not lying to me?”

The woman wasn’t angry; instead, she smiled slightly.

The smile was faint, yet it softened her entire face, transforming her from a cold, snow-capped mountain into a lake rippled by a spring breeze.

“If you don’t believe me, you can leave,” she said calmly, “but your remnant soul will only await death.”

Kai gritted his teeth.

He knew he had no choice.

The remnant souls of Mu Sha and his wife wouldn’t last much longer; he had no time to find another way.

Even if the woman wanted him to stay in the Divine Palace to do three things, even if it cost him half his life, he would have to agree.

“Alright,” Kai took a deep breath, “I agree.”

The woman nodded slightly, seemingly unsurprised by the answer.

“Follow me.”

She turned and walked towards the small island in the center of the lake.

Her steps were light, making no sound on the ice. Her

white dress fluttered slightly in the wind, blending seamlessly with the surrounding ice and snow, as if she herself were a part of this icy plain.

Kai took a step to follow, but after only two steps, his legs gave way, and he collapsed to his knees on the ice.

His spiritual energy was completely exhausted.

Seven days and seven nights of non-stop flight, piercing through the fierce winds of Guixu, had exhausted all his strength.

Now, the moment his taut nerves relaxed, his body immediately gave way.

The woman stopped and glanced back at him.

That glance held a hint of helplessness, and a touch of tenderness she herself didn't even realize.

"Troublesome,"

she murmured, walking back and bending down to place Kai's arm on her shoulder, helping him up.

Her body was cool; even through her clothes, one could feel its chill.

Yet her movements were light and steady, like helping a child who had accidentally fallen.

Kai tried to push her away, but his body was completely unresponsive.

"Don't move," the woman's voice remained calm, yet carried an undeniable authority. "If you move again, I'll throw you into the lake."

Kai: "..."

He wisely remained still.

The woman, supporting him, stepped onto the lake's surface.

Strangely enough, the seemingly fragile ice didn't budge an inch, not even a crack.

Beneath the ice, the inky blue lake water was unfathomably deep, and something could be vaguely seen moving slowly in its depths.

The small island in the center of the lake seemed close, but the journey felt unexpectedly long.

Kai's consciousness grew increasingly blurred, and the scene before him began to distort.

He could only sense the aloof figure beside him and the faint, delicate fragrance emanating from her, like plum blossoms in winter.

"What's your name?" he asked with his last strength.

The woman was silent for a moment.

"Jiang Xuelan."

Her voice was very soft, almost drowned out by the wind.

Kai wanted to say something, but his consciousness completely plunged into darkness at that moment.

His body went limp, leaning heavily against Jiang Xuelan's shoulder.

Jiang Xuelan looked down at the young man leaning on her shoulder and frowned slightly.

"You've got some nerve," she muttered softly, "daring to lean on me on our first meeting."

She didn't push him away, but simply adjusted her position to make him more comfortable.

Then, she continued walking towards the small island in the center of the lake.

Her steps remained steady, her figure still aloof.

Only the hand supporting Kai tightened slightly.

Kai had a very long dream.

In the dream, he stood in a golden ocean, soft sand beneath his feet, a dazzling starry sky above.

Countless golden leaves floated on the surface, each one shimmering faintly, like stars fallen to earth.

He looked down and discovered that the reflection in the water wasn't his face, but a stranger's.

The face was blurry, only a pair of eyes were exceptionally clear.

Those eyes... were very similar to Jiang Xuelan's eyes.

Equally deep, equally aloof, equally holding within them endless years.

"What did you see?"

a voice came from behind.

Kai turned around and saw Jiang Xuelan standing three steps behind him, quietly watching him.

Her white robes were tinged with a warm hue in the golden light, no longer as aloof and distant as before, but instead possessing a touch of human warmth.

"A tree," Kai said, "a very large tree."

Jiang Xuelan raised an eyebrow slightly: "And what else?"

“A sea,” Kai thought for a moment, then added, “and your eyes.”

Jiang Xuelan fell silent.

She looked at Kai, her gaze scrutinizing, thoughtful, and containing a very subtle fluctuation.

“You are very interesting,” she finally spoke, her tone gentler than before, “In thirty thousand years, you are the first person to say such a thing to me.”

Chapter 6261 - 6270

Kai was somewhat embarrassed: “I’m telling the truth.”

“I know,” Jiang Xuelan said calmly, “That’s why I said you’re interesting.”

She turned around and walked towards the depths of the sea.

“Come over when you’re awake, your remnant soul is still waiting for you.”

Kai suddenly opened his eyes.

What came into view was a golden light.

He lay on a stone bed, the stone bed was cold and hard, yet inexplicably made him feel at ease.

Above him was a huge golden canopy, countless golden leaves swaying gently in the breeze, making a rustling sound, like an ancient song.

The air was filled with a faint fragrance of grass and trees, the fragrance was refreshing and invigorating, and his almost exhausted spiritual energy was recovering at an incredible speed.

He sat up and found himself on that small island.

The trunk of the ancient tree was not far from him, as thick as a wall.

The bark was covered with ancient patterns, those patterns were not carved by man, but formed naturally, like the palm lines of the earth.

The tree roots rose from the soil, intertwining to form a natural staircase leading deep into the canopy.

Jiang Xuelan stood on the staircase, her back to him, gazing up at the canopy.

Her long hair shimmered faintly in the golden light, and the hem of her white dress spread out on the roots like a blooming white lotus.

“Awake?” She didn’t turn around, her voice still calm.

Kai rolled out of bed, stretched his body, and was surprised to find that his depleted spiritual energy had recovered by seventy or eighty percent, and the hidden injuries he had sustained in the Guixu Gale had mostly healed.

“How long was I unconscious?” he asked.

“Three hours,” Jiang Xuelan turned around and said calmly, “faster than I expected. The regenerative ability of the Golden Dragon bloodline is indeed well-deserved.”

Kai walked to her side and followed her gaze upwards.

Deep within the ancient tree’s canopy, a tree hollow could be vaguely seen.

The hollow was small, radiating a soft, pale golden light, a warm and peaceful light that drew one closer.

“What is that?” Kai asked.

“The foundation of the Divine Palace,” Jiang Xuelan said, “and also the place where I can help you release your remnant soul.”

She took the soul crystal from Kai’s hand and held it in her palm.

“Follow me.”

She walked up the tree root steps, her steps light and steady.

Kai followed, their footsteps echoing among the branches of the ancient tree, intertwining with the rustling of the leaves to create a strange rhythm.

The tree hollow was much larger than Kai had imagined.

The entrance didn’t look big, but once inside, the space was as spacious as a small palace. The walls of

the hollow were covered with golden patterns, which were consistent with the patterns on the tree bark, radiating a warm light.

In the center of the hollow was a naturally formed stone platform.

The platform was small, just big enough for one person to lie down.

The surface of the platform was smooth as a mirror, covered with complex runes. These runes were not any known script, but a more ancient and primitive language.

“This is… ancient divine script?” Kai exclaimed in surprise.

He had seen this script in ancient texts; it was said to be the language used by the first beings in the world at the dawn of the gods, each character containing the power of the laws of heaven and earth.

“You recognize it?” Jiang Xuelan looked at him with some surprise.

“No, I’ve only seen it in ancient texts,” Kai answered truthfully.

Jiang Xuelan nodded slightly, saying nothing more.

She walked to the stone platform and placed the Soul Crystal in the center. Then, she raised her right hand, palm down, hovering above the Soul Crystal.

Pale golden light emanated from her palm, warm and gentle, of the same origin and quality as the golden light of the ancient tree, yet more condensed and profound.

The light fell on the Soul Crystal, and the blue outer shell on its surface began to slowly melt, like spring snow melting.

The two white lights within the Soul Crystal sensed the external atmosphere and began to tremble violently, their movements becoming much faster, as if they were eagerly trying to break free of their restraints.

Jiang Xuelan's brows furrowed slightly, and a fine layer of sweat appeared on her forehead.

Releasing the remnant souls within the Soul Crystal was far more mentally taxing than she had imagined. These two remnant souls were too weak; the slightest carelessness would cause them to dissipate completely.

She had to use the gentlest and most delicate methods to guide them out of the Soul Crystal bit by bit.

Time passed slowly.

The cave was so quiet that only the two of them breathed and the hissing sound of the Soul Crystal melting remained.

Kai stood to the side, holding his breath, not daring to even exhale.

He dared not disturb Jiang Xuelan, nor even get too close, for fear that his presence would affect her spellcasting.

After about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, the outer shell of the Soul Crystal finally melted completely.

Two beams of white light slowly rose from the molten liquid, like two butterflies emerging from their cocoons, gently fluttering above the stone platform.

Their light was very weak, almost invisible, but the life force contained within it made Kai's eyes slightly warm.

That was Mu Sha.

That was his wife.

They were still alive. Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, formed a hand seal, palms facing upwards, and slowly raised her hands.

Two beams of white light rose slowly with her movement, floating three feet above the stone platform.

Jiang Xuelan's hands danced lightly in the air, her ten fingers like playing a silent melody, each movement precise to the extreme. The

golden patterns on the cave walls began to light up, echoing the light from Jiang Xuelan's palms.

The ancient runes peeled off from the cave walls, transforming into golden symbols that spun and danced in the air, eventually merging into the two beams of white light.

With each symbol merged, the two beams of white light became more solid and brighter.

Kai could clearly feel that the remnant souls of Mu Sha and his wife were becoming more and more complete and powerful.

This process lasted for a full hour.

When the last golden symbol merged into the remnant soul, the two beams of white light finally stabilized completely. They slowly rotated above the stone platform, their light warm and peaceful, like two small suns.

Jiang Xuelan withdrew her hands, took a step back, her face paling slightly.

“The remnant souls have been released and stabilized.”

Her voice was weary. “Next, we need to rebuild their physical bodies. This process will take longer, at least seven days. And…”

She paused, looking at Kai.

“Rebuilding the physical bodies requires a large amount of life force as raw material. My spiritual power can support some, but it’s far from enough. The other part… needs you to provide.”

Kai asked without hesitation, “How much?”

Jiang Xuelan looked at his unwavering eyes and remained silent for a moment.

“Aren’t you going to ask what impact providing life force will have on you?”

“No need to ask.” Kai shook his head. “As long as it can save them, I’m willing to pay any price.”

Jiang Xuelan looked at him quietly, her expression complex.

“You…” she murmured, but didn’t finish her sentence.

She turned around and faced the stone platform again.

“Then let’s begin. Extend your hand.”

Kai extended his right hand.

Jiang Xuelan grasped his wrist, her fingertips gently pressing on his pulse.

Her hand was cold, yet a strange power surged within her fingertips.

That power flowed into his body along the meridians of his wrist, circled in his dantian, and then returned along the same path.

“The Golden Dragon bloodline is indeed extraordinary.” She released her grip and said calmly, “Your vitality is at least ten times stronger than that of cultivators at the same level. With you here, these two bodies should be fine.”

She took out two golden seeds from her sleeve. The seeds were only the size of soybeans, yet they exuded an aura identical to that of the ancient tree.

“These are seeds of the Tree of Life, and they are the key to reshaping the physical body.”

She placed the seeds on the stone platform, one on each side, beneath two beams of white light. “The seeds of the Tree of Life will absorb life force and gradually grow into a human-shaped body. Once the body is formed, the remnant soul will automatically merge into it, completing rebirth.”

She looked at Kai: “This process will last for seven days and seven nights without interruption. You need to continuously inject life force into the seeds until the physical body is fully formed.”

Kai nodded: “I understand.”

He sat cross-legged in front of the stone platform, placing his hands on the two seeds respectively. The Golden Dragon bloodline within his body began to circulate, and golden life force flowed from his palms into the seeds.

The seeds trembled slightly and began to slowly expand.

A tiny root emerged from the seed coat, embedding itself in the cracks of the stone surface.

Then, more roots sprouted, spreading outwards like a spiderweb.

A crack appeared at the top of the seed, and a tender green seedling peeked out, swaying gently in the golden light.

The seedling grew at a visible speed, reaching half a foot in height in the time it takes to brew a cup of tea.

Branches began to sprout from the seedling's stem, and more leaves grew on the branches, each leaf a vibrant, lush green, brimming with life.

Kai could clearly feel his life force draining away at a steady pace.

The feeling wasn't painful, just a sense of exhaustion, like running a very, very long road, his body growing heavier and his steps slower.

But he couldn't stop.

He gritted his teeth and persevered, his Golden Dragon bloodline surging wildly, transforming every ounce of life force into nutrients for the seed's growth.

Jiang Xuelan stood by, quietly watching him.

Her gaze moved from his face to his hands, then to the two thriving seedlings.

"Was it worth it?" she suddenly asked, her voice soft.

Kai didn't look up, only replying calmly, "It was worth it."

Jiang Xuelan fell silent.

She had lived a very long time, seen too many people, too many life and death events, too many grudges and affections.

She had seen people betray their friends for profit, abandoned their companions to survive, and made solemn promises only to forget them instantly.

But she had rarely seen someone like Kai.

For a promise, he had traveled thousands of miles, braving the fierce winds of the Void, risking annihilation, to arrive in a completely unfamiliar place.

To save two people, he had used his own life force as fuel, without even blinking an eye.

“You…” Jiang Xuelan uttered those three words again, then shook her head, not continuing.

She turned and walked to a corner of the cave, sat cross-legged, and closed her eyes to regulate her breathing.

Her spiritual energy had been depleted considerably and needed time to recover.

The cave fell silent, save for the rustling of the seedlings growing and Kai’s steady breathing.

Golden light flowed through the cave, enveloping everything in a warm and peaceful atmosphere.

Outside the cave, the enormous Tree of Life swayed gently in the wind, its golden leaves rustling as if singing an ancient ballad. Time flowed silently within the tree hollow.

Kai had lost count of how long he had sat before the stone platform.

His consciousness flickered, sometimes clear, sometimes hazy, like a candle flame in the wind, its light uncertain.

Life force surged continuously from his palms, flowing into the two golden seeds.

He could feel his flesh growing thinner, his bones more fragile, even the golden dragon bloodline within him was slowly but irreversibly fading.

Yet he did not let go.

Before his eyes, the two seedlings grew taller and stronger day by day. By

the third day, they had grown to three feet tall, their stems branching out into more twigs, each leaf a golden, translucent yellow, radiating a warm glow.

Even more astonishing to Kai was the subtle change in the shape of the two seedlings.

Their tips began to swell, gradually outlining blurry human figures, like two embryos being sculpted.

By the fifth day, the human figures were clearly visible.

On the left seedling, the silhouette of a man was taking shape: broad shoulders, long limbs, and although the features were still blurry, Musa's outline was already discernible.

On the right seedling, the silhouette of a woman was growing simultaneously: a slender figure, slightly curly long hair, and a face that had been blurry in Kai's memory but was now becoming increasingly clear.

Kai looked at the two faces taking shape, his eyes slightly warm.

Soon.

Soon.

On the sixth day, Jiang Xuelan opened her eyes.

She stood up from the corner of the cave, walked to Kai's side, looked down at the growth of the two seedlings, and nodded slightly.

"Faster than I expected. Your vitality is more abundant than I imagined."

Kai didn't speak.

Not because he didn't want to, but because he no longer had the strength to speak.

His face was as pale as paper, his lips were cracked and peeling, his eye sockets were sunken, and he had lost a lot of weight.

His once full cheeks were now sunken, his cheekbones were high and prominent, and he looked like he had been seriously ill.

Jiang Xuelan looked at him and remained silent for a moment.

"Your life force has been depleted by nearly forty percent," she said calmly. "If this continues, you will damage your foundation."

Kai shook his head, his voice hoarse and almost inaudible: "It's alright, I can still hold on."

Jiang Xuelan said nothing more.

She took out a thumb-sized golden fruit from her sleeve. The fruit was crystal clear and emitted an aura identical to that of the Tree of Life.

She held the fruit to Kai's lips.

"Eat it."

Kai glanced at the fruit, didn't ask what it was, and swallowed it.

The fruit melted instantly in his mouth, and a warm liquid flowed down his throat into his stomach, then exploded inside him.

It was an extremely pure life force, like a long-awaited rain on a parched riverbed.

His body trembled slightly, and a trace of color finally returned to his pale face.

The golden dragon bloodline within him was replenished, its circulation speed increased, and the life force injected into the seed became even more abundant.

“These are fruits from the Tree of Life, bearing fruit only once every three hundred years,”

Jiang Xuelan said calmly, as if discussing a trivial matter. “One fruit can replenish twenty percent of your depleted life force. Eat two more, and you should be able to hold on until the end.”

She took two more fruits from her sleeve and placed them beside Kai.

“Eat one every other day. Don’t eat them early, and don’t delay.”

Kai nodded, a complex emotion welling up within him.

They were complete strangers; she could have simply watched him exhaust his life force before intervening.

That way, she would have had another trump card to manipulate him.

But she chose to act at the most opportune moment, using her most precious possession to help him.

“Thank you,” Kai murmured.

Jiang Xuelan didn’t respond, turning and walking back to the corner of the cave, sitting cross-legged again.

The moment she closed her eyes, a very subtle smile appeared on her lips.

The seventh day.

The last day.

The two saplings had fully grown into human form.

Those were no longer “human-like” plants, but two lifelike bodies, their skin, hair, features, and limbs indistinguishable from real people.

The only difference was that their bodies emitted a faint golden light, the trace of the Tree of Life’s power flowing within them.

Musa’s body had its eyes closed, its face peaceful, its breathing even, as if it were simply asleep.

His wife, Kai, remembered her name as Liu Qingyin, was also sleeping peacefully, a faint smile even on her lips, as if she were having a sweet dream.

The two beams of white light above the stone platform sensed the bodies below and began to slowly descend.

They floated to the chest level of the two bodies, paused briefly, and then, like drops of water merging into a lake, silently disappeared into the bodies.

In an instant, the golden light of the two bodies intensified!

The light was dazzling yet warm, filling the entire tree hollow, even making the ancient runes on the cave walls shine brightly.

Kai subconsciously squinted, but his hands remained firmly pressed on the seed, not moving an inch.

The light lasted for about the time it takes to brew a cup of tea, then slowly faded. Silence

returned to the tree hollow.

Then...

Mu Sha's eyelashes trembled slightly.

His eyelids twitched, as if he were trying to open his eyes.

After a few breaths, his eyes finally opened a crack.

They were blank eyes, pupils unfocused, as if he had just woken from a long nightmare.

"Senior Mu Sha!"

Kai's voice was hoarse and urgent. "Senior Mu Sha, can you hear me?"

Mu Sha's pupils slowly focused, his gaze wandering in the tree hollow for a moment before finally settling on Kai's face.

His lips parted slightly, uttering an extremely weak sound.

"Mr...Mr. Chen?"

The voice was hoarse and weak, like a candle flickering in the wind, yet the two words were as clear as if etched into Kai's heart.

Kai's eyes instantly reddened.

"It's me, senior. It's me."

Mu Sha's lips twitched slightly, as if he were smiling.

But he was too weak; the smile vanished before it could even take shape.

His gaze shifted from Kai's face to the woman's body beside him.

Liu Qingyin was still asleep.

Her brows were slightly furrowed, as if she were experiencing an unpleasant dream.

Her breathing was more even than Mu Sha's, but equally weak, almost imperceptible.

"Qingyin..." Mu Sha's voice trembled. He wanted to reach out and touch his wife's face, but his arm only lifted slightly before falling limply back onto the stone platform.

"Don't move, senior," Kai quickly said. "You've just reconstructed your bodies; you're still too weak and need time to recover." Musa didn't move, only turning her head to quietly look at Liu Qingyin's face.

Tears glistened in her eyes.

Jiang Xuelan walked over from the corner, glanced at the two of them, and nodded slightly.

"The reconstruction was successful. The fusion of the remnant soul and the physical body is better than I expected, with almost no rejection reaction."

She paused, then added, "However, they are indeed too weak. In their current state, they will need at least three months of rest to regain basic mobility."

Kai breathed a sigh of relief, as if all his strength had been drained away. He swayed and almost fell off the stone platform.

Jiang Xuelan reacted quickly, grabbing his shoulder.

"You're almost there too."

Her tone was reproachful. “Seven days and seven nights of continuous output of life force, even the Golden Dragon bloodline can’t withstand that kind of consumption. If you don’t want to lose yourself too, let go immediately.”

Kai looked down at his hands, his palms still resting on the two withered seeds.

The seeds’ life force had been completely drained, turning into two clumps of grayish-white powder.

He slowly released his grip, and the two clumps of powder immediately scattered, turning into fine dust and dissipating into the air.

“It’s over…” he murmured, his voice as soft as a sigh.

Jiang Xuelan helped him stand up from the stone platform. His legs were weak, almost unsteady, and he only managed to stay upright thanks to her support.

“Your current condition isn’t much better than theirs,” Jiang Xuelan said calmly. “Go rest over there; I’ll handle the rest.”

Kai nodded, no longer trying to be strong.

He stumbled to a corner of the cave and sat down against the wall.

The cold, hard stone wall gave him a strange sense of peace.

He looked at Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin on the stone platform, at their peaceful sleeping faces, and a slight smile appeared on his lips.

Senior Mu Sha, Senior Liu Qingyin, you’ve finally come back to life.

He closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

When Kai woke up again, it was already the next day.

Sunlight streamed through the cracks in the tree hollow, golden spots dancing on the walls like countless tiny fireflies.

The air was filled with the fragrance of the Tree of Life, a scent that soothed and invigorated him.

He stretched and found that his vitality had recovered to about 50-60%, still somewhat weak, but no longer hindering his movements.

On the stone platform, Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin were still asleep. However, their complexions were better than yesterday, no longer deathly pale, but with a faint hue.

Jiang Xuelan was not in the tree hollow.

Kai stood up, walked out of the tree hollow, and descended the steps from the tree roots.

On the lake, Jiang Xuelan stood by the water's edge, her back to him.

Her white robes fluttered slightly in the morning breeze, her long hair as black as ink, creating a breathtaking scene against the backdrop of ice, snow, and golden light.

She seemed to be looking at something beneath the lake, her expression focused and serene.

"Awake?" She didn't turn around, but she accurately sensed Kai's arrival.

"Yes." Kai walked to her side, following her gaze to the lake.

Beneath the surface of the lake, in its inky blue waters, something was moving slowly.

It was a gigantic fish—no, not a fish, but a dragon?

No, it was enormous, tens of meters long, its body covered in inky blue scales, swimming silently through the water.

Two curved horns were faintly visible on its head, and its eyes were golden, emitting a faint glow in the darkness.

“What is that?” Kai exclaimed in surprise.

“The guardian of the Tree of Life,”

Jiang Xuelan said calmly. “It’s called ‘Gui Xu,’ a creature that has lived in this lake since ancient times. It was here before the Divine Palace was even built.”

The gigantic creature seemed to sense Kai’s gaze, slowly swimming to the vicinity of the lake’s surface, its golden eyes glancing at him through the water.

That glance gave Kai the feeling of being watched by an ancient, primordial beast.

There was no hostility, no kindness, only an indifference that transcended time. In its eyes, Kai was merely an insignificant passerby in the vast expanse of time.

Then, it turned and swam away, disappearing into the darkness at the bottom of the lake.

Kai withdrew his gaze and looked at Jiang Xuelan.

“Your two friends should wake up this afternoon,”

Jiang Xuelan said. “Their recovery is faster than I expected, probably because your golden dragon life force is so abundant, making their physical bodies stronger than those of ordinary reconstructed bodies.”

Kai was delighted: “When will they regain their mobility?”

“As for mobility, they’ll be able to move around slowly after waking up today.” Jiang Xuelan paused, her tone becoming more serious, “But they can’t stay in the Fourteenth Heaven for long.”

Kai was taken aback: “Why?”

Jiang Xuelan turned to look at him, her gaze calm yet serious.

“The laws of the Fourteenth Heaven are more than one level stronger than those of the Thirteenth Heaven. Their current condition is not suitable for them to stay in the Fourteenth Heaven.”

Kai frowned slightly. “I can create a small world for them.”

Jiang Xuelan shook her head and said, “With your strength, even if you could create a small world in the Fourteenth Heaven, how long could that small world exist?

The two of them cannot withstand the laws of the Fourteenth Heaven right now. It’s like… a fish being thrown from a stream into the ocean. The ocean is much wider, but the water pressure is also much greater. If the fish doesn’t have strong enough scales and bones, it will be crushed to death by the water pressure.”

“You mean, they will be in danger if they stay in the Fourteenth Heaven?” Kai asked.

“It’s not just that there will be danger, it’s that there will definitely be danger.”

Jiang Xuelan’s tone left no room for doubt. “With their current physical strength and cultivation level, the laws of the Fourteenth Heaven will begin to erode their bodies within three days.

On the first day, they will feel chest tightness and shortness of breath, and their spiritual energy will circulate poorly;

on the second day, blood will begin to seep from their seven orifices, and cracks will appear in their meridians;

on the third day… their bodies will be crushed into dust by the power of the laws, like a crushed egg.”

Kai clenched his fists.

He had exerted so much effort, traversing tens of thousands of miles of the Guixu Gale, and sacrificing nearly half of his life force to save Mu Sha and his wife from the brink of annihilation.

If they perish again because they stayed in the Fourteenth Heaven, what would be the point of everything he did?

“Then what should we do?” he asked in a deep voice, “Send them back to the Thirteenth Heaven?”

Jiang Xuelan nodded: “The laws of heaven and earth in the Thirteenth Heaven are much weaker than those in the Fourteenth Heaven. With their cultivation level, they will not only not be suppressed in the Thirteenth Heaven, but they will also thrive there because the quality of their reconstructed physical bodies far surpasses that of ordinary cultivators. As long as they return to the Thirteenth Heaven, they will recover quickly, and their cultivation level may even rise to another level.” “Then send them back.” Kai said without hesitation.

Jiang Xuelan glanced at him: “Do you know how to open the void passage between the two heavens?”

Kai remained silent.

He knew.

Opening a void passage from the fourteenth heaven to the thirteenth heaven required immense power.

Ordinary Upper Immortal cultivators couldn’t do it at all; only True Immortals and above possessed this ability.

Although his current strength was enough to challenge a True Immortal of the third rank, opening a void passage required not combat power, but an understanding and control of the laws of space.

“I can try,” Kai said through gritted teeth.

Jiang Xuelan didn’t say anything, only nodded slightly.

In the afternoon, Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin indeed woke up.

When Kai entered the tree hollow, Mu Sha was struggling to sit up from the stone platform.

Liu Qingyin leaned against him, her face pale, but her eyes were open, and she was looking around with a blank gaze.

“Senior Musa!” Kai quickly walked over and supported Musa’s shoulders. “Don’t rush to get up, you’re still too weak.”

Musa raised his head and looked at Kai.

That face, once so full of vigor in the Xuanhuang Realm, was now filled with weakness and exhaustion, but his eyes were still as bright as ever.

“Mr. Chen…” His voice was hoarse, but it carried a sense of relief at surviving a calamity, “I… I thought I was going to die.”

Kai smiled: “Senior, you’re lucky, it’s hard for you to die even if you wanted to.”

Musa gave a bitter smile and turned to look at Liu Qingyin beside him.

Liu Qingyin was looking at Kai with a complicated gaze, her eyes slightly red.

“Mr. Chen… thank you.” Her voice was very soft, almost inaudible. “Musa and I… we owe you a life, no, Musa owes you two lives.”

Kai shook his head: “What are you saying, senior? Back in the Twelfth Heaven, you helped me. If it weren’t for you, I would have died long ago. Besides, if you hadn’t been tainted by the chaotic energy on my body, you wouldn’t have been refined into soul crystals by the temple.”

Liu Qingyin wanted to say something more, but Musa gently took her hand.

“Alright, Qingyin.” Musa’s voice was weak, but it carried a reassuring steadiness. “Mr. Chen isn’t the kind of person who likes to hear thanks. We’ll just keep it in our hearts.”

Liu Qingyin nodded and didn’t say anything more, only gently resting her head on Musa’s shoulder.

Kai watched this scene, a warm feeling welling up in his heart.

They had finally come back to life.

Footsteps came from outside the tree hollow, and Jiang Xuelan walked in.

She glanced at Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin’s condition and nodded slightly, “They’re recovering well. At this rate, with another two or three days of rest, they should regain basic mobility.”

She paused, then looked at Kai, “However, I suggest we send them away today.”

Kai was taken aback, “Today? They haven’t recovered yet…”

“The slower they recover, the longer they stay in the Fourteenth Heaven, and the greater the risk of being corrupted by the laws,”

Jiang Xuelan said calmly and firmly. “While their physical condition is still relatively stable, send them away as soon as possible. The longer we delay, the more variables there will be.”

Kai was silent for a moment, then looked at Mu Sha.

Although Mu Sha didn’t quite understand what was happening, he gleaned some clues from their conversation.

He looked at Kai, then at Jiang Xuelan, and slowly nodded.

“I’ll listen to you. As long as I can live and stay with Qingyin, I’m fine anywhere,” Mu Sha said.

Kai took a deep breath and stood up.

“Alright, let’s do it today.”

He walked to the open space outside the tree hollow, looked up at the golden canopy and pale aurora above, and took a deep breath.

Then, he raised his right hand.

Golden dragon energy surged from his palm, condensing into a phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon in front of him.

Although the phantom was much dimmer than in its prime, it still exuded a chilling dragon’s might.

Kai closed his eyes, focusing all his attention on the void.

He could feel that the spatial barrier of the fourteenth heaven was much thicker than he had imagined.

The barrier was like an invisible wall, separating the fourteenth heaven from the thirteenth heaven below.

To open a void passage to the thirteenth heaven, he needed to first find the weak point of the spatial barrier and then tear it apart with enough power.

He found it.

The weak point was in the void dozens of feet in front of him, like a faint crack, emitting a weak spatial fluctuation.

Kai exerted all his strength, and the golden dragon energy transformed into a sharp sword beam, slashing fiercely towards the weak point!

Boom!

The sword light slashed through the void, unleashing a deafening roar.

Space trembled violently, rippling like the surface of a lake after a boulder has been thrown in.

But the crack… only opened slightly, less than a foot wide, before quickly closing again.

Kai's expression changed. He once more channeled his dragon energy and unleashed another sword strike.

This time, he used all his strength; the golden sword light was even sharper and more ferocious than before.

The sword light struck the same spot, and space trembled again. The crack widened to two feet, but it still wasn't enough.

To pass through a void passage, a crack at least ten feet wide is needed.

Two feet was far from sufficient.

Kai gritted his teeth and channeled his dragon energy a third time.

But this time, his body shuddered violently; the aftereffects of excessive life force depletion erupted at this moment.

A sharp pain shot through his dantian, and the golden dragon energy surged wildly through his meridians, nearly spiraling out of control.

He groaned, kneeling on one knee, large drops of cold sweat dripping from his forehead.

“Mr. Chen!” Mu Sha called out from inside the tree hollow, trying to stand up, but Liu Qingyin pressed her down.

“Don’t go.” Liu Qingyin’s voice was soft, but firm. “Going there now will only cause him trouble.”

Mu Sha gritted her teeth and ultimately didn’t move.

Kai struggled to his feet, took a deep breath, and prepared to attack again.

A hand pressed down on his shoulder from behind.

The hand was cold, yet carried a strange strength.

The power flowed down his shoulder into his body, calming the raging dragon energy within him. The excruciating pain in his dantian gradually subsided under the soothing influence of this power.

“Enough,” Jiang Xuelan’s voice came from behind him, calm and even. “You’ve done your best. Leave the rest to me.”

Kai turned around and saw Jiang Xuelan standing behind him, looking at him calmly.

“But…”

“No buts,”

Jiang Xuelan interrupted him. “You’ve consumed nearly half of your life force, and you still have internal injuries. Forcibly opening a void passage now will only worsen your condition.

Moreover, even if you exert all your strength, with your current understanding of spatial laws, you might not be able to open a passage wide enough.”Jiang Xuelan walked to stand in front of Kai, facing the void ahead.

“Step back.”

Kai hesitated for a moment, then still retreated a few steps.

Jiang Xuelan raised her right hand, her movement as casual as if she were brushing away a passing mosquito.

She didn’t even activate any spiritual power—she simply waved her hand lightly.

Just that one motion.

The void was torn apart as if by an invisible giant hand. A massive crack, three zhang wide, suddenly split open right before Kai!

The edges of the crack were smooth like a mirror. There were no ripples of spatial turbulence, no piercing screech.

It simply appeared there quietly, like a sheet of paper cleanly sliced open by a blade—neat, precise, effortless.

On the other side of the crack, one could vaguely see a vast land—that was the Thirteenth Heaven.

Kai stared blankly at the crack, his mind completely empty.

Using all his strength, after three attempts, he could only open a crack less than two feet wide, and it would close in less than a breath.

But Jiang Xuelan merely waved her hand and opened a three-zhang-wide passage—stable, vast, effortless, as if tearing through space was as simple as breathing for her.

This gap… wasn’t just one or two times—it was the difference between heaven and earth.

“Let’s go,” Jiang Xuelan turned around and looked at Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin in the tree hollow. “The passage can only last for thirty breaths.”

Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin supported each other as they walked out of the tree hollow and came to the crack.

Mu Sha turned back to look at Kai, his eyes filled with complicated emotions.

“Mr. Chen…” his voice choked, “Great kindness needs no thanks. Once we return, we will cultivate well and repay you in the future.”

Kai shook his head. “Senior, don’t say that. After you go back, focus on healing. Don’t take risks again.”

Mu Sha nodded, supporting Liu Qingyin as they stepped into the crack.

Their figures quickly receded within the rift, becoming smaller and smaller, until they disappeared into the land of the Thirteenth Heaven.

The crack slowly closed, and the void returned to calm.

Everything was over.

Kai stood there in silence for a long time.

Then he turned and looked at Jiang Xuelan.

“Your strength… just how strong are you?”

Jiang Xuelan didn’t answer, only glanced at him faintly.

That gaze was calm like still water, yet it made Kai feel as if everything about him had been seen through.

“You don’t need to know,” she said lightly.

Kai was silent for a moment, then asked again, “Who exactly are you?”

Jiang Xuelan raised an eyebrow slightly. “Don’t you already know? I am the Palace Master of the Divine Palace.”

“No, that’s not what I mean.” Kai stared into her eyes. “That’s your position. I’m asking about your identity—your origin, your bloodline. What exactly are you?”

Jiang Xuelan’s gaze shifted slightly.

The change was extremely subtle—so subtle it was almost undetectable—but Kai caught it.

It was… a trace of surprise, and a trace of vigilance.

“Why are you asking this?” Her voice remained calm, but carried a faint sense of distance.

Kai didn’t answer immediately.

He suddenly remembered something.

Back in the Tenth Heaven, he had met someone.

A woman—equally cold, equally powerful, equally unfathomable.

The Palace Master of the Beiming Palace.

The woman who called herself the “Holy Maiden of the Divine Clan.”

Her eyes were very similar to Jiang Xuelan’s.

Not in appearance, but in that aura—that innate coldness, that depth forged through endless years, that detached indifference of one who looks down upon all living beings.

Kai took out the Beiming Token from his chest.

It was a palm-sized token, ice-blue in color. On the front were the words “Beiming,” and on the back was a blooming snow lotus.

The token emitted a faint chill. Even on this island warmed by the Tree of Life, its piercing cold could still be felt.

“I met someone in the Tenth Heaven,” Kai said slowly, staring directly at Jiang Xuelan. “The Palace Master of Beiming Palace. She claimed to be the Holy Maiden of the Divine Clan.”

Jiang Xuelan’s gaze fell on the token, and her pupils shrank slightly.

The change was extremely subtle, but Kai saw it clearly.

“She gave me this Beiming Token and said that if I ever needed help, I could use it to find people of the Ice God lineage.”

Kai said.

Jiang Xuelan fell silent.

Kai put the token away and stared into her eyes, asking word by word:

“Jiang Xuelan… are you from the Ice God lineage of the Divine Clan?”

The air seemed to freeze.

The breeze over the lake stopped. The leaves of the Tree of Life ceased rustling. Even the massive creature called “Guixu” deep beneath the lake stopped moving—as if the entire world was waiting for her answer.

Jiang Xuelan looked at Kai. There was shock in her eyes, scrutiny, and a deeply hidden… trace of fear.

“How do you know about the Ice God lineage?”

Her voice remained calm, but beneath it was an uncontrollable fluctuation. “Very few people know about the branches within the Divine Clan. Even the great sects of the Fourteenth Heaven are unaware that there are deeper subdivisions. Did the Beiming Palace Master tell you?”

She stared at Kai sharply. “Who exactly are you?”

Kai felt slightly uncomfortable under her gaze but did not retreat. “I’m just an ordinary rogue cultivator.”

“As for the Divine Clan branches, yes—it was the Beiming Palace Master who told me. She not only said the Divine Clan has branches, but also that there are hierarchies among them. She said the Ice God lineage is one of the most ancient and noble bloodlines, and once produced the emperor of the Divine Clan.”

Jiang Xuelan’s pupils shrank again.

This time, the change was far more obvious.

“Beiming Palace…” she murmured, almost to herself, “That Divine Clan branch from the Tenth Heaven… how would they know about the Ice God lineage?”

She fell silent for a long time.

So long that Kai thought she wouldn’t answer.

Then she suddenly spoke.

“You’re right.”

Her voice was lower than before, carrying an emotion Kai had never heard from her before.

“I am from the Ice God lineage. To be precise… I am the last inheritor of the Ice God lineage.”

Kai’s heart trembled. “The last inheritor?”

Jiang Xuelan turned around, her back facing him, her gaze fixed on the massive Tree of Life on the lake.

“The history of the Divine Clan is far longer than you imagine.”

Her voice was calm, but beneath it lay endless vicissitudes.

“In the most ancient times, the Divine Clan was the most powerful race in the world. The entire clan was formed by an alliance of the most elite bloodline cultivators. These different bloodlines worked together to rule the Divine Clan—each performing their duties, each guarding their own domain.” “And then?” Kai asked.

“And then…”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice paused slightly, “And then so many things happened. Because of the inherent arrogance of the God Clan, they cannot cultivate with other bloodline cultivators, causing their bloodline to become increasingly fragile after hundreds of thousands of years of inheritance.”

Hearing Jiang Xuelan’s words, Kai instantly thought of the royal families of the mortal world. Wasn’t it because they couldn’t marry outsiders that the chances of inbreeding increased, leading to genetic mutations over time?

It seems the God Clan is facing the same situation now. No wonder both the temples and shrines are secretly engaging in bloodline fusion.

She turned around and looked at Kai.

For the first time, a vulnerable look appeared in her deep eyes. Although it was only fleeting, Kai saw it clearly.

“Our Ice God lineage has slowly declined from being one of the noblest bloodlines. Then, because a female cultivator from our lineage was chosen as a saintess but eloped with someone, it ultimately implicated the entire Ice God lineage.” As Jiang Xuelan said this, a trace of hatred flashed in her eyes, but it quickly disappeared.

“So this is the Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace?” Kai was taken aback.

“You’re right. This Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace should be the female cultivator who eloped back then. Because of her, our Ice God lineage was completely destroyed, and now only I, her successor, remain.” Jiang Xuelan nodded.

“Do you hate her?” Kai asked.

“Hate, and not hate. I hated her before, but now, she was just pursuing her own love, so what wrong did she do?”

“It’s all because of the corrupt system and oppressive class system of the God Race that caused all this.”

Jiang Xuelan’s eyes were full of relief; it seemed she no longer hated him.

“Are you satisfied now?” Jiang Xuelan looked at Kai and smiled bitterly.

Kai fell silent.

He hadn’t expected that this woman, powerful enough to tear through the void with a flick of her wrist, this Palace Master of the God Palace who had lived for countless millennia, was actually a descendant of a race.

Alone, guarding this ancient tree, guarding this cold lake, guarding the last glory of a race that had long since vanished.

“I’m sorry,” Kai said softly. “I shouldn’t have asked.”

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, the bitter smile gradually fading, replaced by a sense of relief.

“There’s nothing you shouldn’t have asked,”

she said calmly. “These things will be known sooner or later. Rather than letting others find out through other channels, it’s better for you to ask me directly.”

She paused, her gaze lingering on Kai’s face for a moment.

“You have the bloodline of the Golden Dragon Royal Family, you can produce the Northern Underworld Token, you know about the Ice God lineage, and most importantly, you’re a Celestial Realm cultivator… Kai, you’re far more complex than you imagine.”

Kai smiled bitterly: “I was just lucky.”

“Lucky?”

Jiang Xuelan chuckled softly, a light laugh tinged with amusement. “You traveled all the way to the Fourteenth Heaven, traversed the fierce winds of the Void to find this secluded place, and have both the bloodline of the Golden Dragon Royal Family and human blood flowing through your veins—and you call that luck?”

Kai opened his mouth, wanting to explain, but found himself speechless.

Jiang Xuelan didn’t press further.

She turned and walked towards the Tree of Life.

“Let’s go.” Her voice returned to its usual calm. “Your friend has left safely; it’s time for you to fulfill your promise.”

Kai was taken aback. “What promise?”

Jiang Xuelan stopped and glanced back at him.

That glance held a hint of cunning, a touch of mockery, and a smile she herself didn’t even realize.

“You promised me you’d stay in the Divine Palace and do three things for me. What, you’ve forgotten?”

Kai: “…”

He had indeed forgotten.

Or rather, he thought Jiang Xuelan was just saying it casually and wouldn’t really take it seriously.

“You’re not joking?” Kai asked tentatively.

Jiang Xuelan’s expression instantly turned cold, like a lake surface frozen by a cold wind.

“I never joke.”

Her tone was icy and serious, making Kai immediately realize that this woman was serious.

Very serious.

“What are those three things?” Kai resigned himself to his fate.

Jiang Xuelan thought for a moment and held up three fingers.

“The first thing.”

She withdrew one finger, her gaze sweeping over Kai.

“The golden dragon bloodline in your body is very special. It’s not just a simple royal bloodline… I sense something else in your bloodline that I’ve never seen before. I need to study it.”

Kai looked at her warily: “How do you study it?”

Jiang Xuelan said calmly: “Just drawing some blood, it won’t hurt.”

Kai: “…Are you sure it’s just drawing blood?”

Jiang Xuelan didn’t answer, but gave him a meaningful look.

Kai suddenly had a bad feeling, as if he had sold himself to a very dangerous person.

No, not just felt.

It was definitely true.

Jiang Xuelan led Kai through the tangled roots of the Tree of Life to the other side of the trunk.

There was a small stone chamber here, much smaller than the previous tree hole, but extremely elegantly decorated.

Several luminous pearls were inlaid on the walls of the stone chamber, emitting a soft, pale blue light.

A stone table was placed in the center, on which were neatly arranged various utensils that Kai couldn’t name: transparent glass bottles, slender silver needles, several jade pieces engraved with runes, and a yellowed ancient book.

“Sit.” Jiang Xuelan gestured to the stone bench in front of the stone table.

Kai sat down as instructed, looking at the utensils on the table, and inexplicably felt as if he were lying on a chopping board.

Jiang Xuelan took out a silver needle from her sleeve. The needle was as thin as a cow’s hair, and a faint golden light flowed around its tip.

She sat down in front of Kai, held the silver needle to her eyes, and said calmly, “Stretch out your hand.” Kai hesitated for a moment, then extended his right hand.

Jiang Xuelan grasped his wrist, pressing her thumb against his pulse, and closed her eyes slightly to feel for a moment.

Then, she gently inserted a silver needle into Kai's fingertip.

The needle was extremely thin, and the moment it pierced him, he felt almost no pain.

But the instant the needle tip touched the blood vessel in his fingertip, Kai's body trembled violently.

A strange power surged from the needle tip into his body, flowing upstream along his blood vessels, like an invisible eye scanning his meridians, dantian, and even every inch of his flesh.

The feeling was strange, as if he had been seen through from the inside out, with no secrets left to hide.

"Don't move," Jiang Xuelan said softly, her gaze focused intently on the silver needle.

A drop of golden blood slowly seeped from the needle tip.

That blood was completely different from ordinary blood; it emitted a faint golden light, like molten gold, and condensed into a round bead on the needle tip.

Even more strangely, a tiny, dragon-shaped phantom could be faintly seen moving on the surface of the drop of blood, emitting a barely audible dragon's roar.

Jiang Xuelan withdrew the silver needle, and the drop of golden blood hovered above her palm, slowly rotating.

She examined it carefully for a moment, then nodded slightly: "Golden Dragon Royal Bloodline, extremely pure, even more concentrated than what you showed me last time."

Kai didn’t speak, only quietly watching her.

Jiang Xuelan carefully placed the drop of blood into a transparent glass bottle, then took a second drop, a third drop… a total of seven drops from Kai’s fingertips before putting away the silver needle.

“Is that enough?” Kai asked.

“Enough.” Jiang Xuelan lined up the seven glass bottles on the stone table, her gaze sweeping over the blood, “Initial observation shows that only three drops are needed; the rest can be saved for later.”

“Later?” Kai looked at her warily.

Jiang Xuelan ignored his gaze, picked up the first bottle of blood, and held it up to her eyes. A pale golden light emanated from her palm, enveloping the glass bottle.

The blood began to change within the light.

The surface of the golden liquid began to boil, tiny bubbles constantly rising and bursting.

A dragon-shaped phantom swam wildly within the bottle, emitting increasingly loud dragon roars.

At the same time, the color of the blood also changed; a second color began to emerge from the gold.

It was a deep, profound purple, like the first ray of dawn before the chaos was broken.

Jiang Xuelan’s pupils suddenly contracted.

She placed the glass bottle back on the table, her hands rapidly forming several hand seals, her fingertips touching the bottle.

The blood within seemed to be awakened by some power; the purple light grew stronger and more intense, eventually completely engulfing the golden light.

The entire drop of blood transformed into a pure purple, slowly rotating within the bottle, emanating an aura that made even Jiang Xuelan's heart tremble.

"This is..." Her voice trembled slightly; it was the first time Kai had seen such a reaction in her.

She abruptly looked up, staring at Kai with eyes burning like flames.

"How can there be chaotic power in your bloodline?"

Kai shook his head. "Don't ask me, I don't know either."

Jiang Xuelan didn't answer, but quickly picked up the second bottle of blood and activated it using the same method.

The result was the same: the gold faded, and purple appeared.

The third bottle, the fourth bottle... all the way to the seventh bottle, every drop of blood contained that purple chaotic power, only the concentration varied slightly.

Jiang Xuelan put down the last glass bottle, took a deep breath, and tried to calm herself.

But her clenched fists and slightly trembling fingertips betrayed her shock.

"Do you know what chaotic power means?" Her voice was low and serious.

Kai shook his head again.

He truly didn't understand chaotic power.

Jiang Xuelan stood up and paced back and forth in the stone chamber, seemingly trying to organize her thoughts.

After a moment, she stopped and turned to look at Kai.

“The power of chaos is the most primordial force at the beginning of time. It encompasses everything, covering all things. The power of humans, the power of beasts, the power of demons, and even the power of our gods all originate from chaos, yet none of them are equal to chaos.”

She picked up a glass bottle and showed Kai the purple blood inside.

“But your blood contains not only the power of chaos, but also… look here.”

She touched the bottle with her fingertip, and the purple light in the blood rippled slightly before beginning to differentiate.

Within the purple light, three distinct rays of light separated.

Golden dragon energy, the power of the golden dragon bloodline;

black demonic energy, the power of the demon race;

and a transparent, water-like light, that is… the most fundamental power of humanity.

The three powers intertwined and fused within the bottle, yet each maintained its independent characteristics.

They were not simply mixed, but truly fused, like the three primary colors merging into white light; the three powers merged into chaos.

But when Jiang Xuelan used a special technique to separate them, they could be completely restored to their three independent powers.

“This is impossible…”

Jiang Xuelan murmured, her voice filled with disbelief. “Human, dragon, and demon—three completely different powers—can coexist perfectly within you, and even fuse into chaotic power… This violates all common sense about cultivation.”

She looked at Kai, her gaze filled with an emotion she herself couldn’t quite explain.

“Just what kind of monster are you?” Kai smiled bitterly, “I told you, I’m just an ordinary rogue cultivator.”

Back in the Great Stone Village of the Celestial Realm, Kai already possessed three powers within him, and these three powers had fused into the power of the three races.

However, Kai hadn’t paid much attention to it, assuming that everyone could possess such power.

“An ordinary rogue cultivator?”

Jiang Xuelan sneered, “An ordinary rogue cultivator can simultaneously contain the power of the Dragon Clan and the Demon Clan within his body without exploding and dying? An ordinary rogue cultivator can possess the power of chaos? An ordinary rogue cultivator can possess combat power comparable to a True Immortal in the Upper Immortal Realm?”

Her series of rhetorical questions left Kai speechless.

Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, sat down again, and looked at him with a complex expression.

“Your body can contain any bloodline and power without the slightest bloodline rejection. This means that you can fuse with all the bloodlines in the world—the divine, the demonic, the dragon, and even more ancient and powerful bloodlines—without any conflict.”

Her voice became low, carrying a seriousness that Kai had never seen in her before.

“Kai, do you know what this means?”

Kai shook his head.

“It means you are the most perfect bloodline vessel in the world,” Jiang Xuelan said, enunciating each word clearly. “Without exception.”

Silence fell over the stone chamber.

Kai digested Jiang Xuelan’s words, a complex emotion welling up within him.

He had always thought his Golden Dragon bloodline was his greatest trump card, but now it seemed the real trump card was the chaotic power he himself had never truly understood.

“So what?” he asked calmly.

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, silent for a long time.

Then, she did something completely unexpected.

She stood up, walked to Kai, and slowly knelt before him.

Her white robes spread out on the cold stone floor, like a white lotus blooming on snow.

She raised her head, her deep, starry eyes looking directly at Kai, her gaze filled with pleading, determination, and a hint of… vulnerability.

“Kai, I have a request.”

Kai was startled by her action and instinctively tried to help her up: “What are you doing? Get up and speak.”

“Let me finish,” Jiang Xuelan pressed his hand down, her tone firm.

She took a deep breath, her voice becoming very low.

“I am the last descendant of the Ice God lineage. The bloodline of the Ice God lineage has weakened to its limit in my generation.

If a way to strengthen the bloodline is not found, the Ice God lineage will be completely wiped out. I have guarded this lake and this tree for ten thousand years, not to watch the Ice God lineage die out in my hands.”

Her eyes reddened slightly, the first time Kai had seen such a look in her eyes.

“What I need is someone whose bloodline can merge with mine. Someone who will not reject the Ice God bloodline, nor be rejected by it. For ten thousand years, I have searched all over the fourteen heavens, and no one has been able to do it.”

She looked at Kai, her gaze burning.

“Until you came.”

Kai finally understood her meaning, his expression changing: “You mean…”

“I want to cultivate with you.”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice was calm, but her ears were faintly tinged with pink, “to merge the bloodline of the Ice God lineage with yours. Only in this way can the Ice God bloodline be strengthened, and the Ice God lineage continue.”

Kai suddenly stood up, took two steps back, his face becoming extremely ugly.

“No.”

His voice was firm, leaving no room for negotiation.

Kai objected because he loathed Jiang Xuelan treating him like a stud.

Although he enjoyed dual cultivation with women—after all, it was a source of pleasure—what was the difference between dual cultivation without an emotional foundation and being a stud?

Back in the Celestial Realm, he was forced by Bai Qian to continuously cultivate with her, absorbing her bloodline; it was unavoidable, as he needed Bai Qian to save him.

However, later, the two developed feelings for each other, and Kai became happy with it.

But this Jiang Xuelan, although beautiful, with a good body and beautiful skin, Kai always felt that Jiang Xuelan was somewhat dangerous, and he couldn't just engage in dual cultivation with her casually.

Jiang Xuelan knelt on the ground, looking up at him, the light in her eyes dimming slightly.

"Why?" Jiang Xuelan asked.

Kai turned around, his back to her, his fists clenched tightly. "I have a wife, women, even dozens of women, but they all have feelings for me."

"And you? You cultivate with me only for your own bloodline, without any feelings for me. I'm not a stud, someone you can use anywhere."

The stone chamber fell into a deathly silence.

Jiang Xuelan remained silent for a long time.

Then, she slowly stood up, brushed the dust off her skirt, and resumed her aloof and distant demeanor.

But her voice was now slightly hoarse, almost imperceptibly so. “Those three things you mentioned.”

Kai stiffened.

“You promised me you’d do three things for me.” Jiang Xuelan’s voice was calm, almost cold. “A man’s word is his bond. You said it.”

Kai turned to look at her.

Jiang Xuelan’s gaze met his directly.

“The first thing, I’ve already done—I drew your blood for research. The second thing…”

She paused, her voice trembling slightly, but she finished.

“To cultivate with me.”

Kai fell silent.

He knew he’d been outmaneuvered.

Jiang Xuelan was right; he had indeed promised.

Regardless of the circumstances, he had spoken the words himself, made the promise himself.

If he went back on his word now, how would he be any different from those treacherous villains?

“Aren’t you afraid I’ll go back on my word later?” Kai’s voice was hoarse.

Jiang Xuelan smiled faintly, a bitter smile mixed with an indescribable emotion.

“You won’t. You’re not that kind of person.”

She turned and walked towards the door of the stone chamber. She stopped at the doorway, without turning back.

“Tonight, beneath the Tree of Life. I will wait for you.”

Her figure vanished through the doorway, leaving Kai alone in the stone chamber, facing the seven glass bottles on the table, speechless for a long time.

Night fell.

The nights in the Land of Return to Nothingness were different from elsewhere; the aurora borealis overhead grew brighter, its pale color transforming into a deep blue-purple, like a river flowing through the sky.

The golden leaves of the Tree of Life swayed gently in the night breeze, rustling like an ancient song, or a low sigh.

Kai stood at the entrance of the tree hollow, watching the aurora and golden shadows reflected on the lake, his mind a jumble of thoughts.

He didn’t want to go.

But he had to go.

A promise is a promise.

The word “promise” was the most valued thing in his life.

If he could break his own promises so easily, what difference was there between him and those he despised?

He took a deep breath and stepped out of the tree hollow.

On the other side of the Tree of Life’s trunk was a small clearing.

In the center of the open space, Jiang Xuelan was already waiting.

She had changed her clothes.

No longer the plain white dress she wore during the day, but a pale blue gauze dress, shimmering with a cold, eerie light under the aurora and golden leaves.

Her long hair cascaded down her back like a waterfall, a few strands falling beside her ears, gently swaying in the night breeze.

She stood with her back to Kai on the largest root of the Tree of Life, looking up at the canopy above.

Golden leaves drifted around her, landing on her shoulders and in her hair, like a golden crown adorning her head.

Hearing footsteps, she slowly turned around.

Moonlight, aurora, and golden light shone simultaneously on her face, making her appearance somewhat unreal, like someone who had stepped out of a painting.

“You’ve come,” she said softly, almost drowned out by the wind.

Kai stopped in front of her.

Their eyes met.

“I’ve thought about it,” Kai’s voice was a little hoarse. “I agree. But I have one condition.”

Jiang Xuelan raised an eyebrow slightly. “What condition?”

“This is just a transaction,” Kai said, enunciating each word clearly. “After the dual cultivation, our relationship will remain the same. I won’t have any other thoughts about you because of this. And you shouldn’t have any other thoughts about me either.”

Jiang Xuelan looked at him and remained silent for a moment.

Then, she smiled.

The smile was faint, almost imperceptible.

But in that smile, there was an emotion that Kai couldn't quite define—was it relief? Bitterness? Or something else?

"Okay," she said, uttering only one word.

Kai nodded, took a deep breath, and began to remove his outer garment.

Jiang Xuelan turned around, her back to him, and slowly removed her thin veil as well.

Her movements were slow and composed, without a trace of awkwardness or haste.

It was as if she wasn't doing something of great importance concerning the continuation of their bloodline, but rather something perfectly ordinary.

Moonlight shone on her snow-white shoulders, outlining a beautiful yet cool arc.

The leaves of the Tree of Life began to fall rapidly, golden leaves swirling and dancing in the air like a golden rain.

They landed around the two of them, carpeting them in gold.

Jiang Xuelan turned around.

Her face remained aloof, but a faint pink tinge tinged her ears and neck.

The pink, shimmering in the moonlight and golden light, made her appear no longer like an ice sculpture, but a woman of flesh and blood, capable of shyness and timidity.

"Come here," she said softly, yet with an undeniable authority.

Kai walked over and stood before her.

The distance between them was only a few feet.

He could smell her scent; it was no longer the delicate fragrance of winter plum blossoms from the daytime, but a richer, more intoxicating, cool fragrance, like the first snow of deep winter, crisp and sweet.

Jiang Xuelan raised her hand and gently pressed it against his chest.

Her hand was cold, yet a strange warmth flowed through her fingertips.

The heat seeped into his body through his chest, coursing through his limbs and bones, causing the golden dragon blood within him to boil uncontrollably.

“Close your eyes,” she murmured, her voice like a dream. “Relax, don’t resist.”

Kai closed his eyes as instructed.

The next moment, he felt Jiang Xuelan’s body press against him.

Her body was cold, as cold as a piece of jade bathed in moonlight.

Yet, within that coolness, something extremely warm flowed, like a hot spring surging beneath the ice.

Two completely different forces began to circulate between their bodies.

One was Kai’s golden dragon energy, scorching, domineering, and filled with the power of destruction and rebirth;

One was Jiang Xuelan’s icy blue divine light, clear, gentle, and containing ancient laws that froze time and space.

The two forces circulated within their bodies, intertwining and merging.

Initially, they repelled each other; the scorching heat of the dragon energy and the coldness of the divine light clashed fiercely within them like fire and water.

Kai felt as if his body was being torn in two, one half molten lava, the other icy frost.

Jiang Xuelan's brows furrowed tightly, a fine layer of sweat beading on her forehead.

But she gripped Kai's hand tightly, their fingers interlocked, palms facing each other.

"Don't resist," her voice whispered in his ear, carrying a reassuring power, "Let them merge."

Chapter 6271 - 6280

Kai gritted his teeth, enduring the excruciating pain within his body, and relaxed his control over the dragon energy.

The golden dragon energy no longer resisted the icy blue divine light, and the two forces began to slowly merge.

At first, it was very slow, so slow that the change was almost imperceptible.

But gradually, the merging began to accelerate.

The gold and icy blue mixed together, creating a completely new color—a warm, pale gold like the dawn.

That pale golden light surged from both of them, enveloping the entire open space.

The leaves of the Tree of Life fell faster in this light, golden leaves swirling and dancing in the air, finally settling around the two of them, forming thick carpets.

Kai could feel the bloodline of the Ice God lineage merging into his body.

It was an extremely ancient and extremely pure power.

It was cold but not piercing, powerful but not domineering, like a wisp of spring breeze sealed within millennia of ice, slowly flowing through Kai's meridians.

At the same time, the golden dragon bloodline within him was also flowing back into Jiang Xuelan's body.

Golden dragon energy and icy blue divine light intertwined and merged within her body, awakening the long-dormant Ice God bloodline within her. The

bloodline power, dimmed by the passage of time, began to revitalize under the nourishment of chaotic energy.

Time flowed silently around them.

They didn't know how much time had passed—perhaps an hour, perhaps a whole night—before the pale golden light slowly receded, merging back into their bodies.

Kai slowly opened his eyes.

He felt a wondrous change in his body.

The spiritual energy in his dantian was more abundant than before, his meridians were wider, and even the golden dragon bloodline within him had become more solid and pure.

He could feel that although his cultivation level hadn't broken through, his strength had undergone a qualitative leap.

It was an indescribable feeling, like a sword that was already incredibly sharp, now reforged and honed, becoming even more resilient and sharper.

Peak of the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

Just one step away from entering the sixth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

Jiang Xuelan's changes were even more pronounced.

Her aura was significantly stronger than before.

A touch of color returned to her usually cold face, replacing

her previous pallor. Her eyes were brighter, like polished stars, radiating a soft glow.

The bloodline of the Ice God lineage had been revitalized within her.

Jiang Xuelan looked down at her hands, feeling the power flowing through her, and remained silent for a long time.

Then, she looked up at Kai.

Something subtly changed in his deep eyes.

It was no longer scrutiny, no longer a mere glance, but rather a tenderness she herself couldn't quite define.

"Thank you," she said softly, almost inaudibly.

Kai shook his head, remaining silent. The

atmosphere between them was somewhat delicate.

What had just happened had caused an irreversible change in their relationship.

Although Kai had said, “This is just a transaction,” some things, once done, can never be undone.

Jiang Xuelan seemed to sense this change as well. She stood up, her back to Kai, picked up the scattered veil from the ground, and draped it over her shoulders.

Her movements remained composed, but her slightly trembling fingers betrayed her inner turmoil.

“You…” she hesitated, not turning around, “Do you regret it?”

Kai remained silent for a moment.

“No regrets.” His voice was calm and firm. “This is what I promised you, and what’s done is done. There’s nothing to regret.”

Jiang Xuelan’s shoulders relaxed slightly, as if she had breathed a sigh of relief.

She didn’t speak again, simply standing quietly beneath the Tree of Life, looking up at the golden canopy above.

The night breeze rustled the golden leaves, as if telling some ancient secret.

Kai walked to her side, standing shoulder to shoulder.

Neither of them spoke, simply standing quietly, watching the Tree of Life sway gently in the night breeze.

After a long time, Jiang Xuelan suddenly spoke.

“Do you know why the Divine Palace was built here?”

Kai shook his head.

Jiang Xuelan turned around, her gaze passing over the lake's surface, looking towards the place deep within the lake where the enormous creature called "Return to the Void" slept.

"Because this is the oldest place in the Fourteenth Heaven. Older than the gods, older than the humans, older than any known race."

Her voice deepened, carrying the solemnity of recounting an ancient legend.

"The Tree of Life wasn't planted by us gods. It was already here when we discovered it. And the reason it can grow here is because..."

She pointed to the bottom of the lake.

"Because of Guixu."

Kai followed her gaze.

The dark blue lake was bottomless, and the enormous creature had sunk to the deepest part, only a faint golden light shimmering in the darkness.

"Guixu is more than just a fish." Jiang Xuelan's voice was soft, "It is the guardian of this lake, the guardian of the Tree of Life, and even more so... the guardian of a door."

"What door?" Kai asked.

Jiang Xuelan didn't answer immediately.

She remained silent for a long time, so long that Kai thought she wouldn't answer, when she suddenly spoke.

"A door leading to... the ancient era."

Kai's pupils contracted slightly.

“The roots of the Tree of Life extend to the deepest part of the lake. At the bottom of the lake, there is a fissure guarded by the Void. On the other side of that fissure lies a world forgotten by time, an ancient battlefield.”

Her voice carried a strange rhythm, as if chanting an ancient epic.

“There lie the most powerful beings of ancient times. The ancestors of the gods, the progenitors of the demons, the emperors of the dragons… all left their legacies and relics on that battlefield.”

She turned to look at Kai, her gaze intense.

“I’ve always wanted to go down and see. But the Void forbids anyone from approaching that fissure. It has guarded it for countless years, forbidding anyone from stepping onto that ancient battlefield.”

“But now it’s different.”

A slight smile played on her lips, a hint of cunning mixed with anticipation.

“The Void recognizes my bloodline, and it recognizes your Golden Dragon bloodline. But it doesn’t recognize…our bloodline.”

Kai was taken aback. “Our bloodline?”

Jiang Xuelan held out her hand, palm up.

A pale golden light appeared in her palm—neither pure gold nor pure ice blue, but a perfect fusion of the two colors.

It was the power of the fusion of the Ice God bloodline and the Golden Dragon bloodline. It was

also the power that Kai and Jiang Xuelan shared after their dual cultivation.

“The Void won’t stop those who possess this power,”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice held a hint of excitement. “Because this power, and the power of certain beings in that ancient battlefield…is of the same origin.”

Kai finally understood her meaning.

“You want me to go down with you?”

Jiang Xuelan nodded.

“That’s the second thing.” She held up two fingers and waved them in front of Kai. “Accompany me to explore the place guarded by the Void.”

Kai was silent for a moment, then slowly nodded.

“Okay.”

Jiang Xuelan smiled.

The smile was faint, yet more genuine than ever before.

It was no longer a cold, aloof, distant smile, but a woman’s heartfelt smile after receiving a promise.

“Tomorrow,” she said, turning to the colossal creature slumbering deep within the lake, “we’ll go down tomorrow.”

Deep in the lake, the golden eyes of Guixu slowly opened a crack in the darkness.

That gaze pierced the inky blue water, landing on the two people standing side-by-side beneath the Tree of Life.

It lingered on them for a long time.

Then, those golden eyes slowly closed, sinking back into the darkness.

As if in acquiescence.

As if waiting. The next morning, before dawn,

Kai stood by the lake, watching the dark blue water ripple gently in the morning breeze.

The aurora borealis overhead had lost its deep blue-purple hue of the night, returning to its pale color, like an old piece of silk washed countless times, drifting silently in the sky.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside him, dressed differently today. Instead of the plain white dress, she wore a form-fitting ice-blue water-colored gown that accentuated her slender and graceful figure.

Her long hair was tied up high, secured with a white jade hairpin, revealing her fair neck and well-defined collarbones.

In her hand, she held a fist-sized bead, which emitted a faint blue light. The light was not dazzling, but it possessed a penetrating quality, as if it could illuminate the deepest seabed.

“This is a water-repelling pearl.”

She handed the pearl to Kai. “Hold it in your mouth, and you can breathe freely underwater. The Lake of Return to Nothingness is unfathomably deep, and the water pressure increases the deeper you go. An ordinary cultivator’s protective true qi won’t last long.”

“I don’t need this. I can freely enter and exit the vast ocean…” Kai felt he didn’t need the water-repelling pearl.

He had even been in the sea; what was a small lake to him?

“The ocean you’ve entered is just an ordinary ocean, while this is the Lake of Return to Nothingness, which is incomparable to an ordinary ocean. If you insist on showing off and refuse, then I can refuse to give it to you.” Jiang Xuelan pretended to put the water-repelling pearl away.

“Since that’s the case, then I still want it.”

Kai snatched the water-repelling pearl.

The water-repelling pearl felt cool to the touch, its surface as smooth as a mirror.

He did as she said and put the pearl in his mouth. A cool breath immediately flowed from the pearl, down his throat, and into his lungs, making him feel refreshed.

“Stay close to me.” After Jiang Xuelan finished speaking, she leaped into the lake.

Her entry into the water was as graceful as a waterbird returning to its nest, without stirring a single ripple, her entire body silently disappearing into the dark blue lake.

Kai took a deep breath and followed suit, leaping into the lake.

The moment he entered the water, the power of the Water-Repelling Pearl took effect.

A thin layer of blue light covered his body, isolating him from the lake water.

That light membrane was like an invisible armor, completely neutralizing all pressure.

The temperature of the lake water was much lower than he had imagined.

Even with the protection of the Water-Repelling Pearl, he could still feel the bone-chilling cold.

That cold was not just ordinary low water temperature, but an ancient chill that had permeated countless years, as if the lake water had never been warm since the beginning of time.

Feeling the piercing cold, Kai was somewhat relieved that he had used the Water-Repelling Pearl.

Jiang Xuelan was not far in front of him, the icy blue water almost blending into her, only the white jade hairpin that bound her hair emitted a faint light in the darkness, like a guiding lamp.

The two dived one after the other into the depths of the lake.

At first, they could still see light; the aurora borealis and the golden light of the Tree of Life shone through the water, forming shimmering pillars of light like holy light emanating from a church dome.

But as they went deeper, the light grew dimmer and weaker.

Eventually, all that remained was pure darkness; they couldn't even see their own hand in front of their face.

Kai could only rely on the light from Jiang Xuelan's white jade hairpin to orient himself.

The surrounding lake water began to change.

It was no longer ordinary lake water, but a thicker, heavier liquid, as if swimming in ink.

The light membrane of the water-repelling pearl hissed in this thick liquid, seemingly under immense pressure.

"We're almost at the territory of Guixu,"

Jiang Xuelan's voice suddenly rang in Kai's ears, clear as if speaking face-to-face.

She was using divine sense to transmit her voice.

As soon as she finished speaking, Kai felt something move ahead.

It was an extremely faint vibration, emanating from the depths of the lake, passing through the thick water, and reaching his body.

The vibration was very slight, almost imperceptible, yet the power it contained made Kai's heart leap.

It was a heartbeat.

An unimaginably enormous heart, beating slowly and powerfully deep within the lake.

Thump.

Thump.

Thump.

Each beat caused the lake water to tremble slightly, each beat made Kai's blood resonate.

"It's awake." Jiang Xuelan's voice held a hint of tension.

In the darkness ahead, two golden lights appeared.

The lights were initially small, like two distant stars.

But they grew larger and brighter, like two rising suns.

When the two lights were large enough to illuminate an area of hundreds of feet around them, Kai finally saw what they were.

Eyes.

The eyes of Guixu.

The pair of golden eyes floated in the darkness, each tens of feet wide, larger than any building Kai had ever seen.

There was no emotion in the golden pupils, only an indifference that transcended time, as if watching two ants that had strayed into the nest of a giant beast.

And behind those eyes was the outline of Guixu.

The outline was so enormous that Kai's vision couldn't contain it.

He could only see patches of dark blue scales, each the size of a house, reflecting a cold, eerie luster in the golden light.

Dark red light flowed between the scales, like magma surging in cracks in rock.

Gui Xu's body twisted and turned, extending into the deeper darkness of the lake, its end invisible.

"Don't be afraid," Jiang Xuelan's telepathic transmission sounded again, "It won't harm us. But it will...test us."

Test?

Before Kai could react, one of Gui Xu's eyes shifted slightly, and its golden gaze fell upon him.

That gaze felt like a mountain pressing down, and Kai felt his very soul tremble.

It wasn't pressure, but something more fundamental; before that gaze, he felt all his secrets were laid bare, as if he had been seen through from the inside out.

Gui Xu's gaze lingered on him for three breaths.

Then, it looked away.

Its golden eyes slowly closed.

At the same time, a deep rumble came from the depths of the lake, like the earth groaning.

The rumble grew louder and closer, and the entire lake trembled violently.

Kai felt the lakebed beneath his feet cracking open.

A fissure extended from the place where the Ruins slumbered, widening and deepening.

Blinding white light surged from the fissure, a light unlike sunlight or the aurora, but a more ancient and primal radiance, like the first ray of light at the beginning of time.

“Now!” Jiang Xuelan grabbed Kai’s wrist and pulled him towards the fissure.Like two arrows released from a bow, the two sped through the thick lake water towards the white light.

The crack drew closer, the white light growing increasingly blinding.

Kai could feel a power within that white light that made his blood boil.

That power resonated with the chaotic energy within him, causing every inch of his flesh to tremble and rejoice.

Then, they plunged into the white light.

The white light lasted for about three breaths before abruptly vanishing.

Kai found himself standing on unfamiliar land.

The ground beneath his feet was a dark gray rock, as hard as refined steel, its surface covered with countless cracks.

These cracks were not naturally formed, but rather traces of something shattered and reformed by an extremely terrifying force. He could sense

a faint trace of aura lingering within each crack, an aura so ancient it was chilling, so powerful it was despair-inducing.

He looked up and surveyed his surroundings.

At that sight, his breath caught in his throat.

This was a battlefield.

A vast battlefield stretching to the horizon.

Three moons hung in the sky: one blood-red, one pitch-black, and the third, half-broken, a lonely crescent moon gleaming palely.

The three colors of moonlight bathed the battlefield in an eerie, dark purple hue.

Countless enormous skeletons lay scattered across the land.

Kai had never seen such colossal creatures.

Some skeletons stretched hundreds of feet long, like the spines of mountain ranges;

others soared into the clouds, like pillars supporting the heavens.

Their owners must have possessed world-destroying power in life, but now, only cold white bones remained, silently recounting their former glory under the moonlight.

“These are…” Kai’s voice was hoarse.

“The remains of ancient races.”

Jiang Xuelan stood beside him, her gaze sweeping over the massive skeletons, her voice filled with complex emotions. “The ancestors of the gods, the progenitors of the demons, the emperors of the dragons, and some races I don’t even recognize. They all perished here.”

She pointed to the tallest skeleton in the distance.

The skeleton stood upright on the ground, towering a thousand feet tall. Even as just a skeleton, it exuded a suffocating aura of power.

The skeleton's shape vaguely resembled a human form, and it possessed a pair of enormous bone wings on its back, hundreds of feet wide when spread.

"That is my ancestor, the progenitor of the Ice God lineage. His name was Bei Mingyuan, the first being in the world to master the laws of ice. Legend says he could freeze time, seal space, and plunge the entire Chongtian realm into an eternal winter with a single thought."

She then pointed to another side.

There lay an even larger skeleton, exceeding a thousand feet in length, shaped like a winding mountain range.

The skeleton's head still had two enormous horns, and even after countless millennia of death, faint arcs of electricity still flickered on those horns.

"That's the Dragon Emperor, the Void Dragon King. Legend says he's the ancestor of all dragons, and his bloodline later branched into major dragon races such as the Golden Dragon, Silver Dragon, Black Dragon, and Red Dragon. His power was enough to tear apart the void; a single claw could shatter a star."

Kai stared blankly at the Dragon Emperor's skeleton, his Golden Dragon bloodline suddenly boiling uncontrollably.

It was a resonance from the depths of his bloodline; his blood was telling him that the skeleton before him was

his ancestor, the source of the dragon blood flowing within him.

He involuntarily took a step towards the skeleton.

“Kai!” Jiang Xuelan grabbed him, “Don’t go near. The residual power on those skeletons is still enough to kill a True Immortal Realm cultivator. You don’t know what’s still alive inside.”

Kai stopped, took a deep breath, and forcibly suppressed the boiling dragon blood within him.

She was right.

This place was too dangerous; he couldn’t act impulsively.

He looked around, beginning to carefully observe the battlefield.

“Is this battlefield only accessible through the Ruins of Return?”

Kai was extremely puzzled. Such a vast ancient battlefield—among the thirty-six heavens of the Celestial Realm, could it only be entered through the Ruins of Return, the fourteenth heaven?

Jiang Xuelan looked at Kai as if he were a fool.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Kai asked, confused.

“This is an ancient battlefield. This area is outside the Celestial Realm, unbound by its laws. How could it be that only the fourteenth heaven can enter?”

“There should be passages to this ancient battlefield in all thirty-six heavens of the Celestial Realm, but not all of these passages are known to anyone,”

Jiang Xuelan explained to Kai.

“So you mean, we might encounter cultivators from other heavens here?”

Kai was stunned!

Jiang Xuelan nodded: “Possibly…”

“Damn, if we encounter cultivators from the thirty-sixth heaven, wouldn’t we be utterly insignificant?” Kai’s heart skipped a beat.

He was incredibly powerful, able to fight beyond his level, possessing the Golden Dragon bloodline and the power of chaos.

But if he really encountered a cultivator at the 36th Heaven, with his current strength, he’d probably be finished off with a single breath.

“So we need to explore this area as quickly as possible and then go back!” Jiang Xuelan said, then began to examine the battlefield.

Kai followed suit, looking around.

He saw that besides the enormous skeletons, countless broken weapons were scattered on the ground.

There were broken longswords, shattered battle axes, dented shields, and other objects whose purpose he couldn’t recognize.

He’d never seen the materials of these weapons before; some emitted a faint blue light, some had a liquid metallic sheen, and some, even broken, still trembled slightly, as if still yearning for battle.

“These weapons…” Kai crouched down, wanting to pick up a broken blade.

“Don’t touch them!”

Jiang Xuelan stopped him again, “Those weapons are imbued with the resentment of those who died in ancient battles. If you touch them, that resentment will immediately erode your soul, dragging you into an endless nightmare.”

Kai’s hand stopped in mid-air, slowly withdrawing.

He stood up and looked at Jiang Xuelan: “Have you been here before?”

Jiang Xuelan shook her head: “No. But the records of this battlefield are in the books of my divine palace. Those records were left by the ancestors of the Ice God lineage. They once entered this place and left alive.”

She paused, then took out a palm-sized jade slip from her bosom and gently rubbed it.

The jade slip glowed faintly, projecting a map into the void.

It was an extremely complex map, marking the general terrain of the battlefield. In the center was a vast plain, surrounded by continuous mountain ranges, and in the very center of the battlefield was a striking red marker. “Where is that?” Kai asked.

“The deepest part of the battlefield,”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice deepened. “The records of our ancestors say that the most powerful being on this battlefield is buried there, an enemy that even the combined might of the gods and the dragon emperors couldn’t defeat.

No one knows its identity, no one knows its origin, no one knows why it’s here, or why it’s hostile to all the ancient races.”

She put away the jade slip and looked at Kai.

“I’m going there.”

Kai frowned. “Why? That place is too dangerous.”

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, her gaze resolute. “Although the bloodline of the Ice God has been strengthened through our dual cultivation, it’s only temporary. If we don’t find the true source, the Ice God’s bloodline will eventually decline again and perish completely.”

She stretched out her hand, palm up. A pale golden light appeared—the power of their fused bloodlines.

But at the edge of that light, a faint dimming had begun to appear.

“Look. The power of fusion is waning. Our dual cultivation can only maintain the activity of our bloodlines, but it cannot change the root cause of the Ice God bloodline’s decline. That root cause lies deep within this battlefield.”

Kai fell silent.

He understood Jiang Xuelan’s meaning.

She wasn’t taking a risk; she was searching for a final way out for her race.

“Let’s go.” Kai’s voice was calm and firm. “I’ll go with you.”

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, a complex emotion flashing in her deep eyes.

She didn’t say thank you, only nodded slightly.

The two walked towards the depths of the battlefield.

After walking for about an hour, the surrounding environment began to change.

The skeletons on the ground became increasingly dense and enormous.

Some skeletons piled up together, forming small mountains of white bones.

A faint stench of decay began to permeate the air. It wasn’t the smell of rotting flesh, after all, these skeletons had existed for countless millennia, but something more essential—the aura of death, the law of decay flowing through the air.

“Something’s wrong.” Jiang Xuelan suddenly stopped, her brows furrowed.

Kai sensed it too.

It was too quiet.

Not just ordinary quiet, but a deathly stillness, a stillness that swallowed even sound itself.

Their footsteps, their breathing, even their heartbeats, vanished completely after a few steps, as if sucked away by something.

“Something’s watching us,” Kai whispered.

His intuition was screaming a warning.

It was the feeling of being watched by a predator, like a wild beast lurking in the darkness, waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

Jiang Xuelan gripped the jade slip in her hand tightly, icy blue divine light swirling around her.

“Be careful…”

Before she could finish speaking, the ground beneath her feet suddenly trembled violently.

Rumble…

Amidst the deafening roar, a skeleton not far away began to move.

It was the skeleton of a dragon, smaller than the surrounding skeletons, but still over a hundred feet long.

It had been lying quietly on the ground, like a small mountain of bones, but now, its skeleton began to reassemble. Spine vertebrae joined together one by one, ribs returned to their places, and the bones of its limbs clattered and snapped together.

In just a few breaths, a complete bone dragon stood before the two.

Two eerie green flames burned in its eye sockets—the fire of death, a product of ancient resentment.

Its mouth slowly opened, emitting a silent roar. The roar was soundless, yet the shockwave distorted the surrounding air, sending rubble flying everywhere.

“This is…” Kai instinctively gripped the Dragon Slayer Sword.

“The resentment of ancient warriors has attached itself to the skeletons,”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice was urgent yet calm. “They will attack any intruder. Don’t linger, come with me!”

She grabbed Kai’s hand and rushed in another direction.

The bone dragon’s massive tail swept across, creating a gust of wind.

Each of the bone spikes on its tail was several meters long, sharp enough to cut through gold and jade.

The two leaped into the air, barely dodging the sweep.

The bone tail grazed their feet, slamming into the ground with a deafening roar, creating a huge crater and sending debris flying.

Kai glanced back after landing, his pupils suddenly contracting. It wasn’t just that one bone dragon.

More skeletons began to move.

The enormous skeletons scattered on the ground rose one after another.

There were skeletons of divine ancestors, their massive bone wings spreading out, blotting out the sky;

there were skeletons of demonic progenitors, with two horns on their heads and gleaming fangs in their mouths;

and there were other races that Kai couldn't recognize, some with three heads and six arms, some covered in bone spikes, some like mobile fortresses.

Dozens of enormous skeletons surrounded them from all directions, eerie green necromantic flames flickering in their eye sockets like dozens of ghostly lamps.

"Run!" Jiang Xuelan shouted, pulling Kai along as they sprinted.

The two transformed into streaks of gold and blue light, weaving through the gaps between the skeletons.

A massive skeletal hand emerged from the skeleton of a divine ancestor, reaching for them.

Each finger of that hand was several meters long, its tip sharp as a knife. Jiang Xuelan dodged to the side, striking the skeletal hand's wrist with a backhand.

A burst of icy blue divine light erupted, instantly covering the skeletal hand's wrist with a thick layer of ice, its movement momentarily halted.

Kai seized the opportunity, drawing his Dragon-Slaying Sword and slashing at the skeletal hand's knuckles.

The golden sword light collided with the eerie green necromantic fire, erupting in dazzling sparks.

The finger snapped off, crashing heavily to the ground, kicking up clouds of dust.

But more skeletons had already surrounded them.

A skeleton of a demonic ancestor opened its massive maw, spewing forth a torrent of black flames that swept towards the two.

The flames were so hot that even the air itself seemed to burn, melting the ground into dark red magma wherever they passed.

Jiang Xuelan formed hand seals, and an ice-blue light shield materialized before them.

Boom...

Black flames crashed into the light shield, the collision of ice and fire unleashing a deafening roar.

Countless cracks appeared on the shield, and Jiang Xuelan was thrown back several steps, a trickle of blood escaping from the corner of her mouth.

“This way!” Kai grabbed her, rushing towards a seemingly weak opening.

A three-headed, six-armed skeleton blocked their path.

Its six bony arms swung simultaneously, each hand wielding a massive bone blade, hacking down at the two of them.

Kai gritted his teeth, his golden dragon bloodline surging completely.

Golden dragon energy burned fiercely on his body, and the Dragon-Slaying Sword erupted with dazzling golden light. He slashed with his sword, colliding simultaneously with six bone blades.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Six metallic clangs rang out almost at the same time, shaking the surrounding air.

Kai’s hands went numb from the impact, and he nearly dropped his Dragon-Slaying Sword, but even the three-headed skeleton was forced back several steps.

“Quick!” Jiang Xuelan pulled Kai, rushing through the gap created by the skeleton.

The two ran with all their might towards the depths of the battlefield.

Behind them, dozens of enormous skeletons pursued relentlessly, each step shaking the earth.

After running for an unknown amount of time, the pursuers finally faded into the distance.

The skeletons seemed to have their own territories, ceasing their pursuit once they reached a certain boundary.

They stood on that unseen boundary line, the eerie green flames in their eye sockets flickering a few times, then slowly turned and returned to their original sleeping place.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan stopped, panting heavily.

Both were injured. Kai’s left arm was slashed by a bone blade, blood dripping from his wrist;

Jiang Xuelan had blood at the corner of her mouth, and her face was paler than usual.

“You’re injured,” Kai said, his brow furrowing as he looked at the blood at her mouth.

“It’s just a minor injury, nothing serious,” Jiang Xuelan wiped the blood from her mouth, her gaze fixed on the distance. “We’re almost there.”

Kai followed her gaze.

The terrain ahead had changed; it was no longer a flat plain, but a vast basin.

The basin's edge was a steep cliff, riddled with countless cracks, like marks left by the fingers of a giant.

And at the bottom of the basin…

Kai gasped.

At the bottom of the basin was a sea.

A sea composed of necromantic fire.

The eerie green flames surged, burned, and roared at the bottom of the basin, covering the entire basin and stretching as far as the eye could see.

The flames were extremely hot; even from thousands of feet away, Kai could still feel their scorching heat.

In the very center of the Sea of the Dead lay a solitary island.

The island was small, only a few hundred feet in circumference.

There were no skeletons, no fragments of weapons, only a stone platform.

On the platform lay a bead the size of a fist.

The bead's color constantly changed, sometimes gold, sometimes black, sometimes ice blue, sometimes transparent and colorless.

With each change, a visible ripple spread from the bead, sweeping across the entire Sea of the Dead.

Wherever those ripples passed, the fires of the dead would be temporarily extinguished, then reignited.

"What is that?" Kai asked.

Jiang Xuelan stared at the bead, her gaze burning like two flames.

“The root of the Ice God lineage, the Heart of the Northern Abyss.”

Her voice trembled, a surge of excitement suppressed for millennia.

“The bloodline of the Ice God lineage originates from the Northern Abyss. And the core of the Northern Abyss’s power is this bead he left behind after his death.

As long as we can obtain it, the Ice God bloodline will be truly strengthened, no longer needing to rely on any external force to maintain it.”

She looked at Kai, a pleading glint in her eyes.

“Help me get it.”

Kai looked at the Sea of the Dead, his brows furrowed.

“How do we get across that sea of fire?”

Jiang Xuelan took out an ice-blue talisman from her bosom. The talisman was covered with dense runes, radiating a bone-chilling cold.

“This is an Ice-Sealing Talisman left by the ancestors of the Ice God lineage. It can be used to open a passage in the fire of the dead. But it can only last for thirty breaths. Within thirty breaths, we must cross the sea of fire and reach that island.”

“Thirty breaths?”

Kai estimated the distance.

From the cliff edge to that island, it was at least several thousand feet away.

Crossing thousands of feet of necromantic flames within thirty breaths, and facing the potential dangers within the sea of fire…

“Enough.” He took a deep breath. “Let’s go.”

Jiang Xuelan threw the Ice-Sealing Talisman towards the Sea of Necromantic Flames.

The talisman exploded above the sea of fire, transforming into a dazzling ice-blue pillar of light.

The pillar shot straight into the Sea of Necromantic Flames, parting the eerie green flames to reveal a narrow passage.

The passage’s floor was charred rock, flanked by fire walls tens of feet high.

The fire walls were extremely hot; even with the Ice-Sealing Talisman protecting them, Kai could still feel the suffocating heat.

“Go!”

The two leaped into the passage, sprinting with all their might.

The charred rock beneath their feet was as hot as a branding iron, each step sizzling with every step.

The fire walls on either side were constantly writhing, as if they might close at any moment.

Ten breaths.

They had covered a third of the distance.

Twenty breaths.

They could already see the island.

The stone platform and the bead on the island were clearly visible.

Just then, the Sea of the Dead suddenly churned.

A gigantic skeletal hand emerged from the sea of fire, reaching for the two.

This skeletal hand was larger than any skeleton they had encountered before; each finger was tens of feet long, its tips burning with eerie green flames.

“Don’t stop!” Jiang Xuelan shouted, striking out with her palm.

The icy blue divine light collided with the skeletal hand, instantly covering its surface with a layer of ice, slowing its speed.

But that layer of ice lasted less than a breath before being melted by the necromantic fire on the skeletal hand.

The skeletal hand continued its grab.

Kai gritted his teeth, drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword, and unleashed a full-force strike.

The golden sword light transformed into the phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon, roaring as it crashed into the skeletal hand.

Boom!

The skeletal hand was blasted back several feet, but the force of the impact caused Kai’s blood to surge, a trickle of blood spilling from the corner of his mouth.

“Ten more breaths!” Jiang Xuelan shouted.

The two continued their charge.

The bony hand caught up again, this time faster and more ferocious.

At the same time, a second and a third skeletal hand emerged from the sea of fire, surging in from all directions and completely blocking the passage.

“It’s too late!” Jiang Xuelan’s voice carried a hint of despair.

Kai watched the approaching skeletal hands, then glanced at the beads on the island not far away, a ruthless glint in his eyes.

“You go first.”

He grabbed Jiang Xuelan’s shoulder and hurled her violently towards the island.

“Kai!” Jiang Xuelan’s voice drifted in the wind; she tried to turn back, but her body had already been thrown into the air above the island.

Simultaneously, Kai turned around, facing the three enormous skeletal hands.

Within his body, chaotic power began to boil.

Purple light surged from his body, condensing into a thin layer of armor on his skin.

That armor was neither golden nor ice-blue, but a deep purple, like the first ray of light before the chaos was created.

The three skeletal hands reached for him simultaneously.

Kai raised his hands, palms facing outwards.

Purple light erupted from his palms, colliding with the three bone hands.

Boom!

The entire Sea of the Dead trembled. The three skeletal hands, struck by the purple light, instantly had their eerie green flames extinguished, revealing countless cracks on their bones.

They let out a silent roar and slowly retreated into the sea of fire.

But Kai paid a price.

Blood seeped from his seven orifices, his meridians felt like they were being burned by flames, and the excruciating pain nearly made him faint.

Although the power of chaos was immense, its consumption was also staggering; this attack had almost exhausted all his strength.

The passage began to collapse.

The walls of fire on both sides closed rapidly, and eerie green flames surged in from all directions.

Kai mustered his last strength and rushed towards the island.

Ten zhang.

Five zhang.

One zhang.

His feet finally touched the ground of the island.

The passage behind him slammed shut the moment he stepped onto the shore, and the necromantic fire once again covered the entire basin.

Kai's legs gave way, and he collapsed to his knees, gasping for breath. Blood seeped from the corners of his mouth, nostrils, and ears, dripping onto the charred rocks.

Jiang Xuelan rushed over and caught him.

"Are you crazy!" Her voice trembled, her eyes reddening. "Do you know how dangerous that was? If you had been a step slower, you would have..."

"I didn't die, did I?" Kai forced a smile, wiping the blood from his lips. "Where's the bead?"

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, her lips trembling slightly, wanting to say something, but ultimately said nothing.

She stood up, walked to the stone platform, and reached out to take the bead that kept changing color.

The bead trembled slightly in her palm, then fell silent.

Its color finally stabilized at a pale gold, the color of the fusion of the Ice God's bloodline and the Golden Dragon's bloodline.

Jiang Xuelan held the bead, silent for a long time.

Then, she turned around, walked to Kai, and squatted down.

"Here you go."

Kai was stunned: "What?"

"The Heart of the Northern Abyss."

Jiang Xuelan placed the bead in Kai's hand. "Your chaotic power can contain it. Integrate it into your body, and your strength will experience a qualitative leap."

Kai looked at the bead in his hand, then at Jiang Xuelan.

"Isn't this what you wanted? The source of the Ice God lineage..."

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, a slight smile playing on her lips, a smile filled with relief and an indescribable gentleness.

"I don't need it anymore."

She stretched out her hand, palm facing upwards.

A pale golden light appeared in her palm, more solid and brighter than before, the dimness at the edges completely gone.

“Our dual cultivation, plus the battle in the Sea of the Dead just now, has sufficiently tempered my bloodline. The bloodline of the Ice God lineage has regained its vitality.”

“Most importantly, the bloodlines we’ve fused through dual cultivation now possess mutual affection.”

She looked at Kai, her gaze gentle.

Kai understood Jiang Xuelan’s meaning. If their initial dual cultivation was merely a transaction, now, Jiang Xuelan definitely had feelings for Kai.

“Right now, the Heart of the Northern Abyss is just icing on the cake for me. But for you… it’s a lifeline. Your chaotic power is still too weak and needs more nourishment.

The Heart of the Northern Abyss contains the essence of the Northern Abyss’s life’s power. If you can absorb it, your strength will rise to a whole new level,” Jiang Xuelan said.

Kai was silent.

He looked down at the bead in his hand, feeling the immense power contained within it.

That power was ancient, pure, and powerful, like a sleeping ocean waiting to be awakened.

“Then I won’t be polite.” He didn’t mince words and pressed the bead directly against his chest.

The moment the bead touched his skin, it turned into a ball of pale golden liquid and entered his chest.

Then…

an unprecedented power exploded within him.

That power surged wildly through his meridians like a flood bursting its banks or a volcanic eruption.

His dantian swelled violently under the impact of this power, and his meridians were almost shattered.

“Ah!”

Kai roared to the sky, his purple light surging and enveloping the entire island.

His cultivation had broken through at that moment.

Upper Immortal Realm, Rank Six.

Upper Immortal Realm, Rank Seven. Only

when he reached the peak of Rank Seven did the power gradually subside. He

was only one step away from the True Immortal Realm.

Kai gasped for breath, his body drenched in sweat.

He looked down at his hands, feeling the terrifying power flowing through his body, a sense of unreality washing over him.

Peak Rank Seven of the Upper Immortal Realm.

His combat power was already enough to instantly kill a True Immortal Realm Rank Four cultivator.

If Ning Zhi appeared before him again, he could easily defeat him.

“How do you feel?” Jiang Xuelan’s voice came from beside him.

Kai looked up at her.

His eyes held a trace of confusion and doubt.

“I feel… there’s more than just power within the Heart of the Northern Abyss.”

Jiang Xuelan’s brows furrowed slightly: “What else?”

Kai closed his eyes, carefully sensing the changes within his body.

Deep within that immense power, he vaguely sensed an extremely faint aura.

That aura was unimaginably ancient, terrifyingly powerful, yet incredibly weak, like a flickering candle in the wind, ready to be extinguished at any moment.

That aura was conveying a message to him.

A fragmented, indistinct message.

“Save me…”

Kai suddenly opened his eyes, his face changing drastically.

“What’s wrong?” Jiang Xuelan asked anxiously.

Kai looked at her, his voice hoarse.

“Bei Mingyuan… is still alive.”

Jiang Xuelan’s pupils suddenly contracted.

The two locked eyes, the surrounding necromantic flames churning silently, as if responding to a slumbering being.

The three moons still hung in the sky, one blood-red, one pitch-black, and one half-broken.

Their tricolored moonlight bathed the battlefield in an even more eerie hue.

And in the deepest part of the battlefield, something that had slumbered for countless millennia seemed to stir slightly. “Alive!” Kai nodded.

Kai’s words instantly turned Jiang Xuelan’s face deathly pale.

“Bei Mingyuan…is still alive? Still alive?” Her voice trembled slightly, her gaze fixed on Kai’s chest, as if something terrifying might emerge from there at any moment.

Kai closed his eyes, carefully sensing the faint aura within his body.

That aura indeed came from the Heart of Bei Mingyuan—no, from a wisp of remnant soul deep within the Heart of Bei Mingyuan.

It was so weak, almost imperceptible, yet it undeniably existed, like a spark buried deep in ashes, ready to reignite at the slightest disturbance.

“Not completely alive,”

Kai carefully chose his words, “a wisp of remnant soul, sealed within the Heart of Bei Mingyuan. When I absorbed the bead, it merged into my body.”

Jiang Xuelan placed her hand on Kai’s chest, icy blue divine light surging into his body, attempting to locate the remnant soul.

But her divine light circled Kai’s meridians, finding nothing.

“I can’t find it.” Jiang Xuelan’s brows furrowed. “It’s hidden very deep.”

Kai opened his eyes, his gaze grave.

“It’s lurking near my dantian. It’s not a threat for now, but I can sense… it’s waiting for something.”

“Waiting for what?” Jiang Xuelan pressed.

Kai shook his head.

He didn’t know.

But his intuition told him that what that remnant soul was waiting for was definitely not good news.

“We must leave here.”

Kai stood up and stretched his still somewhat stiff body.

After absorbing the Heart of the Northern Abyss, his injuries had mostly healed, and the power flowing within him was several levels stronger than before.

Jiang Xuelan also stood up, her gaze sweeping over their surroundings.

The Sea of the Dead was still churning, and eerie green flames roared at the bottom of the basin.

The three bone hands had been severely injured by Kai’s chaotic power and had temporarily retreated into the depths of the sea of fire, but who knew when they would burst out again.

“Should we go back the way we came?” Kai asked.

Jiang Xuelan shook her head: “The Ice Seal Talisman has been used up, so we can’t cross the Sea of the Dead anymore. And…”

She looked up at the three moons in the sky, her voice low, “I can feel this battlefield awakening. The longer we stay here, the more dangerous it will be.”

She took out the jade slip and projected the map again.

This time, her finger pointed to a spot on the edge of the map.

“There’s a secret passage here. The records left by the ancestors of the Ice God lineage say that this secret passage leads directly to the bottom of the Lake of Return to Nothingness, without having to cross the Sea of the Dead.”

Kai glanced at the route marked on the map and nodded.

“Let’s go.”

The two left the isolated island and hurried along the edge of the basin in the direction marked on the map.

The surrounding skeletons began to stir again.

The bone dragons, the skeletons of the ancestors of the gods, and the skeletons of the progenitors of the demons that had retreated earlier seemed to sense the change in the aura of the two and awoke from their slumber once more.

They did not immediately attack, but followed the two at a distance, the eerie green flames in their eye sockets flickering, as if hesitating about something.

“They fear the Heart of the Northern Abyss within you,”

Jiang Xuelan said softly. “The Northern Abyss is one of the most powerful beings on this battlefield; his aura naturally suppresses these skeletons.”

Kai didn’t speak, but quickened his pace.

He could sense that although the skeletons dared not approach for the time being, they wouldn’t hesitate indefinitely.

Once they overcame their fear of the Northern Abyss’s aura, they would swarm forward.

The two walked through the skeletons for about half an hour before finally finding the entrance to the secret passage marked on the map.

It was a hidden cave, the entrance blocked by a huge skeleton.

Jiang Xuelan pushed aside the skeleton, and a putrid smell wafted from the cave. In the darkness, a stone staircase leading downwards could be vaguely seen.

“This is it.” Jiang Xuelan stepped into the cave first.

Kai followed closely behind. The moment they entered the cave, a low rumble came from behind them, and the skeleton that had been pushed aside moved back to its original position, sealing the entrance again.

The cave was pitch black.

Jiang Xuelan’s white jade hairpin emitted a faint light, barely illuminating the distance a few steps ahead.

The stone steps were narrow, allowing only one person to pass at a time. The cave walls on both sides were covered with ancient runes, which shimmered slightly under the light of the white jade hairpin, emitting a faint blue glow.

“These runes…” Kai reached out and touched the engravings on the cave wall.

“They are sealing runes of the Ice God lineage,” Jiang Xuelan said without turning her head. “Our ancestors used these runes to seal the secret passage, preventing anything from the battlefield from escaping from here.”

The two walked down the stone steps for about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, until they finally reached the end.

Ahead was a stone door.

The stone door was also covered with runes, even denser and more complex than those on the cave walls.

In the very center of the stone door was a palm-shaped indentation, the edges of which still retained a faint icy blue light.

Jiang Xuelan placed her hand on the indentation.

Icy blue divine light surged from her palm, resonating with the runes on the stone door.

Runes lit up one after another, like lamps being lit, their light growing ever brighter. Rumble

...

The stone gate slowly opened.

Outside the gate lay a deep blue lake.

The bottom of the Lake of Return to Nothingness.

The two stepped out of the stone gate, which closed silently behind them. The light of the runes gradually dimmed, and the entire gate merged with the surrounding rocks, leaving no trace.

The Water-Repelling Pearl was still in Kai's mouth, and a blue light membrane once again covered his body.

Jiang Xuelan didn't need the Water-Repelling Pearl; she was a descendant of the Ice God lineage, and the lake water was like air to her.

The two swam towards the surface of the lake.

After swimming less than a hundred feet, Kai sensed something was wrong.

The surrounding lake water had become thicker than before, as if something was secretly stirring the currents.

Deep in the lake, the two golden lights shone again—brighter and more dazzling than before.

The Lake of Return to Nothingness had awakened.

This was no longer the half-awake, half-asleep state of before, but a true, complete awakening.

The two golden lights grew larger and closer.

The entire lakebed trembled, the dark blue water churning and surging, and a massive whirlpool rose from the bottom, whipping up rocks and silt into a frenzy.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan were pulled by the force of the whirlpool, their bodies unsteady.

“Steady up!”

Jiang Xuelan shouted, and icy blue divine light surged from her body, freezing the water around them into a huge block of ice.

The ice block shook violently in the whirlpool, but at least it stabilized.

Guixu slowly rose from the darkness at the bottom of the lake.

Kai finally saw its full form.

It was a… dragon.

No, not a dragon.

It was more ancient, more primal than a dragon.

Its body resembled a snake, but without scales, it was covered with a smooth, dark blue skin, beneath which flowed a dark red light, like magma from the earth.

Its head had seven eyes; besides the two enormous golden eyes, there were five smaller eyes distributed on either side of its head, each emitting a different color of light.

How long was its body?

Kai didn't know.

He could only see it rising continuously from the darkness at the bottom of the lake, seemingly without end.

The seven eyes of Gui Xu simultaneously watched the two people in the ice block.

Then, a voice rang in Kai's mind.

The voice wasn't language, but a more direct mental fluctuation.

It had no sound, no tone, yet Kai clearly "heard" its meaning.

"Hand over... the... spoils of the battlefield."

Jiang Xuelan's expression changed.

"It wants the Heart of the Northern Abyss,"

she whispered to Kai. "The Void Guards the entrance to this lake and the ancient battlefield, forbidding anything from being taken out. It sensed the Heart of the Northern Abyss within you."

Kai frowned. "The Heart of the Northern Abyss belongs to the Ice God lineage. Why should I hand it over?"

Before Jiang Xuelan could answer, the Void's voice rang out again.

This time, it was deeper and more oppressive than before.

“Hand it over… or… die.”

The voice exploded in Kai’s mind, making his vision go black.

The chaotic power within his body automatically activated, and purple light surged from his body, neutralizing most of the mental impact.

The Void’s seven eyes flickered simultaneously.

It seemed surprised by the chaotic power within Kai.

“Chaos… you are… that person’s… successor?”

Kai didn’t know who it was referring to, but he had no interest in knowing.

“The Heart of the Northern Abyss has become one with me; I cannot hand it over.” His voice was calm yet firm. “If you want it, you can come and take it.”

Jiang Xuelan turned sharply to look at him, her eyes filled with horror: “Are you crazy? The power of Guixu is unfathomable.”

“I know,” Kai interrupted her, “but we have no way out.”

He was right.

Guixu had already blocked the path to the lake.

Even if they handed over the Heart of the Northern Abyss, Guixu might not let them go.

Rather than waiting to die, they might as well take a gamble.

Guixu’s seven eyes narrowed simultaneously.

That was an expression of anger.

“Arrogant…humans…”

The lakebed trembled violently, Guixu’s body began to contract, and then it suddenly sprang back.

Like a spring compressed to its limit, it rushed towards the two at an unimaginable speed!

Its speed was so fast that even Kai’s dynamic vision couldn’t keep up.

He only saw a dark blue shadow flash before his eyes, and then a terrifying force crashed into the ice block in front of him.

Boom!

The ice shard shattered instantly, sending Kai and Jiang Xuelan flying. They tumbled dozens of feet in the lake before barely regaining their footing.

A trickle of blood escaped Kai’s lips; Gui Xu’s attack was many times stronger than the skeletons on the ancient battlefield.

“Split up!”

Jiang Xuelan shouted. “Don’t give it a chance to wipe us all out.”

The two swam off in opposite directions.

Gui Xu’s seven eyes flickered, seemingly hesitating about which one to pursue first.

Kai gave it no time to hesitate.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword was drawn, golden dragon energy exploding in the lake, transforming into a hundred-foot-long golden dragon that roared as it charged towards Gui Xu.

Gui Xu didn’t even dodge, merely flicking its tail.

That tail, like a colossal pillar supporting the sky, lashed out with terrifying force, striking the golden dragon.

The dragon shattered with a deafening roar, turning into a shower of golden light.

But this was the pause Kai needed.

The chaotic power within him erupted completely.

Purple light surged from his body, dyeing the surrounding lake water purple.

The light contained the domineering power of the Golden Dragon bloodline, the serene coldness of the Ice God bloodline, and the all-encompassing power of chaos.

He poured all his power into the Dragon-Slaying Sword, transforming himself into a purple streak of light, rushing towards the seven eyes on the head of Guixu.

Guixu seemed to sense the threat, and its seven eyes simultaneously erupted with blinding light.

Golden, red, blue, green, purple, white, and black light—seven colors of light shot out from the seven eyes, weaving into a massive net of light before Guixu.

Kai’s purple sword light collided with the net of light.

Boom!

The entire Guixu Lake trembled.

A large portion of the lake water was evaporated by this force, revealing the rocks and silt at the bottom.

The surrounding temperature instantly rose by tens of degrees, steam billowing, like a fairyland.

Dense cracks appeared on the net of light.

But Kai's sword light had also exhausted its power.

He was thrown backward by the recoil, his tiger's mouth split open, blood staining the hilt of the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Just then, Jiang Xuelan launched an attack from the other side of Guixu.

Her icy blue divine light transformed into countless thin ice needles, each containing the power of the Ice Sealing Law, silently shooting towards Guixu's seven eyes.

Guixu sensed the danger and tried to turn to defend itself, but Kai's light net was still in front of it, blocking its vision.

The ice needles pierced through the gaps in the light net, precisely striking Guixu's seven eyes!

"Roar!"

Guixu let out a sound for the first time.

The sound was not a mental fluctuation, but a real, deafening roar.

The sound contained endless pain and rage, shaking the rocks at the bottom of the lake, causing the lake water to surge, and causing blood to seep from the eardrums of Kai and Jiang Xuelan.

All seven eyes closed simultaneously.

Guixu's body began to writhe wildly, its tail, torso, and head trembling violently.

The dark red light beneath its inky blue skin grew even brighter, as if it were about to burst forth.

“Its eyes are its weak point!” Jiang Xuelan shouted, “Now!”

Kai gritted his teeth and once again channeled the power of chaos.

This time, he held nothing back.

The purple light condensed to its limit on the Dragon-Slaying Sword, the dragon patterns on its blade flashing wildly, and the entire sword emitting a piercing hum.

He took a deep breath, pouring all his power, all his will, and all his life into this single strike.

Then, he released his grip.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword transformed into a purple streak of light, like a shooting star, trailing a long, fiery tail, shooting towards the two largest golden eyes on Guixu’s head.

Guixu sensed a deadly threat and frantically twisted its head, trying to dodge.

But all seven of its eyes were injured by ice needles, its vision blurred, making it impossible to accurately judge the trajectory of the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

The purple streak of light pierced its eyelids and entered its left eye!

“Roar!”

Guixu’s roar grew even more shrill and frenzied.

Dark blue blood gushed from its eyes, its temperature so high it boiled the surrounding lake water.

Kai was scalded by the boiling water, his skin torn and bleeding, but he didn't retreat; instead, he charged towards Guixu.

Jiang Xuelan moved as well.

The two, one on the left and one on the right, simultaneously rushed towards Guixu's head.

Kai's chaotic power and Jiang Xuelan's ice god power converged above Guixu's head, the two forces merging together to unleash an even greater power than before.

Pale golden light surged from their hands, transforming into a gigantic light sword, which slashed fiercely down towards Guixu's head!

Guixu let out a final roar, and then...

it stopped moving.

Its massive body froze in the lake water, all seven eyes tightly closed, dark blue blood slowly flowing from their sockets, staining the surrounding lake water a dark red.

The light sword struck its head, leaving a deep wound, but not fatal.

Kai gasped for breath, every part of his body aching.

Jiang Xuelan wasn't in much better shape; her face was as white as paper, her lips purple, and she swayed precariously.

Gui Xu's seven eyes slowly opened a crack.

This time, the indifference in its gaze vanished, replaced by a complex mix of emotions: anger, resentment, and even a hint of...acknowledgment?

"Chaos...successor...you...won."

Gui Xu's voice echoed in Kai's mind, much weaker than before.

"Take…the Heart of the Northern Abyss…and go…but…be careful…he's still…alive…"

With that, Gui Xu's eyes closed completely.

Its body slowly sank to the bottom of the lake, returning to the darkness.

The dark blue lake water gradually calmed, and the temperature began to return to normal.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan exchanged a glance, both seeing the relief of surviving a catastrophe in each other's eyes.

"Let's go." Kai grabbed Jiang Xuelan's hand and swam towards the surface.

This time, nothing could stop them.

When they emerged from the lake, it was already evening.

The golden leaves of the Tree of Life shimmered in the afterglow of the setting sun, like millions of golden stars.

The aurora borealis drifted slowly overhead, its color changing from pale white to a gentle pinkish-purple.

Kai stumbled onto the lakeshore and collapsed onto the grass.

Jiang Xuelan sat beside him, equally exhausted.

They remained silent for a long time.

"Gui Xu's last words…" Jiang Xuelan spoke first, "…he's still alive, and he was talking about Bei Mingyuan?"

Kai nodded.

“The remnant soul of Bei Mingyuan is indeed within me. Gui Xu sensed it.”

Jiang Xuelan frowned, her expression grave. “Gui Xu said to be careful, does that mean the remnant soul of Bei Mingyuan… poses a threat to you?”

Kai smiled bitterly. “What threat could a wisp of remnant soul pose? It’s so weak right now that it can’t even sustain itself, what can it do to me?”

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, her expression serious. “Don’t underestimate Bei Mingyuan. He is the ancestor of the Ice God lineage, the first being in the world to master the laws of ice. His methods are beyond our comprehension.”

Kai didn’t speak, but closed his eyes, trying to sense the location of the remnant soul within his body again.

This time, he sensed it.

That remnant soul… was no longer in his dantian.

It was moving.

It was moving towards his sea of consciousness!

Kai suddenly opened his eyes, his expression changing drastically.

“What’s wrong?” Jiang Xuelan asked anxiously.

“It’s heading towards my sea of consciousness…” Kai’s voice trembled slightly, “It’s trying to possess me!”

Jiang Xuelan suddenly stood up, pressing her hands to Kai’s temples. Icy blue divine light surged wildly into his head, attempting to stop the remnant soul.

But the remnant soul was too fast.

It seemed to have waited for this moment for countless years, knowing every meridian and acupoint in Kai's body intimately. Before

Jiang Xuelan's divine light could catch up, it had already rushed into Kai's sea of consciousness.

Kai's consciousness was instantly dragged into his sea of consciousness.

His sea of consciousness was a golden ocean, with countless golden specks floating on its surface—his memories, his emotions, fragments of his soul.

In the very center of his sea of consciousness, a book was shimmering with golden light—the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

It stood quietly in the center of his sea of consciousness, radiating a soft and warm light.

And at this moment, an icy blue figure was floating above his sea of consciousness.

It was a blurry humanoid silhouette, its face indistinct, only vaguely discernible as it wore ancient armor and had a pair of enormous ice wings on its back. A

chilling aura emanated from it, and a thin layer of frost formed beneath its feet in the golden ocean of consciousness.

"How many years..." the figure spoke, its voice aged and deep, "How many years... I have finally waited for this moment."

Its gaze fell on the book in the center of the consciousness, its brow furrowing slightly.

"The Great Luo Golden Scripture? I didn't expect... you would have something like this in your consciousness?"

Its gaze then swept across the golden ocean of consciousness, seeing the floating golden specks—Kai's memories.

"Golden Dragon Bloodline… Chaotic Power… and the aura of the Ice God lineage…"

the figure's voice carried a hint of excitement, "This body is even more perfect than I expected."

It raised its hand, reaching towards the depths of Kai's soul. Kai felt an irresistible force tearing at his consciousness, trying to rip his soul from his body.

The feeling… was like being choked by an invisible hand, unable to breathe, unable to struggle, only able to watch helplessly as he was dragged bit by bit into the abyss.

"Give up, little brat," the light and shadow's voice carried a hint of pity. "Your body is mine."

Just then, the Great Luo Golden Scripture suddenly lit up.

Not the soft light of before, but a blinding, scorching golden radiance, like the sun!

The light transformed into beams of golden light, shooting towards the icy blue light and shadow above his sea of consciousness.

The light and shadow's expression changed drastically, spreading its ice wings to try and defend itself.

But the power of the golden beams was too terrifying.

The ice wings melted instantly in the golden light, and the light and shadow's body was pierced through with several holes by the beams, the icy blue light rapidly dimming.

"Ah!"

The light and shadow let out a shrill scream, its voice filled with resentment and fear.

“The Great Luo Golden Scripture… how can it possess such power… impossible… impossible!”

The light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture grew increasingly intense, enveloping the entire sea of consciousness in golden light.

The icy blue light and shadow, like snow under the blazing sun, rapidly melted and shrank within this light.

It desperately tried to escape Kai’s sea of consciousness, but the golden light formed an invisible barrier, trapping it within.

In just a few breaths, the light and shadow shrank from a human form into a fist-sized icy blue sphere.

It hovered above the sea of consciousness, trembling, its light dimmed to the extreme, like an oil lamp about to go out.

The light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture slowly receded, returning to its previous gentle state.

But it did not completely relax; a faint golden halo still surrounded the icy blue sphere, like a cage, firmly locking it in.

Kai gasped for breath, his consciousness regaining control of his body.

He opened his eyes and saw Jiang Xuelan looking at him anxiously, her forehead covered in sweat.

“How are you?” Her voice trembled.

Kai opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but found his voice hoarse beyond belief.

“I…I’m fine.”

He sat up, closed his eyes, and sensed the situation in his sea of consciousness again.

The icy blue sphere of light still hovered above his sea of consciousness, trapped by a golden halo.

It no longer tried to possess him, but remained there quietly, like a caged beast.

A faint spiritual fluctuation came from the sphere of light.

“I…I surrender.”

It was Bei Mingyuan’s voice, a hundred times weaker than before.

“The Great Luo Golden Scripture…protects you…I can’t possess you…Spare me my life…I can…be used by you…”

Kai was silent for a moment.

He didn’t want to leave this threat behind.

But Bei Mingyuan was the ancestor of the Ice God lineage, Jiang Xuelan’s ancestor, and he couldn’t make a decision on his own.

He opened his eyes and told Jiang Xuelan about the situation in his sea of consciousness.

Jiang Xuelan listened and remained silent for a long time.

Then, she sighed softly.

“Spare his life.”

Her voice was soft, tinged with weariness. “He is, after all, my ancestor. Besides… he’s trapped now and poses no threat to you. Keeping him might be useful later.”

Kai thought for a moment and nodded.

He spoke to the icy blue sphere of light in his sea of consciousness: “I’ll spare your life, but you must behave yourself in my sea of consciousness. If you do anything improper again…”

He didn’t finish, but the meaning was clear.

The sphere of light trembled slightly.

“I… understand… thank you…”

The icy blue sphere of light slowly sank into the depths of Kai’s sea of consciousness, falling asleep under the golden halo of the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

Kai opened his eyes and looked at Jiang Xuelan.

“It’s resolved.”

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, her eyes filled with worry, relief, and a hint of indescribable emotion.

“In your sea of consciousness lives an ancient god-ancestor.” Her voice carried a bitter smile. “How does it feel?”

Kai thought for a moment and said seriously, “A bit cramped.”

Jiang Xuelan paused for a moment, then smiled.

The smile was faint, yet more genuine than ever before.

“Let’s go.” She stood up, extending her hand. “Go back and rest. Your body needs proper care.”

Kai took her hand and stood up.

The two walked side-by-side towards the Tree of Life.

Golden leaves rustled gently in the night breeze.

The aurora borealis drifted slowly overhead, its pinkish-purple light bathing them like a soft blanket.

Deep within the lake, the seven eyes of Guixu slowly opened a crack.

It watched their departing figures, remaining silent for a long time.

Then, it closed its eyes and sank back into the darkness.

The dark blue lake returned to its calm, as if nothing had happened.