Chapter 6501 - 6510

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Divine Abyss Pavilion, Ice Palace.

Venerable Xuanbing sat on his ice crystal throne, a glass of ice wine in his hand, which he gently swirled.

Ice wine was a specialty of the Divine Abyss Pavilion, brewed with ten-thousand-year-old cold spring water; it was icy cold on the palate, with a sweet aftertaste.

He liked this cool sensation, which kept him alert and prevented him from being misled by the disturbances of the outside world.

“Pavilion Master, news has come from the Heavenly Extreme Palace that they will launch an attack in a month,” a black-clad cultivator knelt in the hall, head bowed, his voice respectful.

Venerable Xuanbing put down his wine cup, a slight smile playing on his lips. “A month? Venerable Tianji is in a hurry. It seems that the allure of that treasure is even greater for him than I imagined.”

“Sect Master, are we really going to help Tianji Palace attack Wan Yao Ridge?”

The black-clad cultivator looked up, his eyes full of doubt. “Wan Yao Ridge has no grudge against us, why should we get involved? Although the demon race has always been xenophobic, Qingqiu has never provoked our Shenyuan Pavilion.”

Venerable Xuanbing glanced at him and smiled coldly. “What do you know? Venerable Tianji promised 30% of the benefits. That’s an ancient treasure, surpassing even the Golden Immortal realm.

If we can obtain that treasure, my cultivation will break through to the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal realm. At that time, who will dare to look down on our Ice God lineage?

Those divine clan branches that once suppressed us, I will settle accounts with them one by one.”

He stood up, walked to the window of the Ice Palace, and gazed at the frozen world outside.

The cold wind howled, and the ice crystals refracted the sunlight into a rainbow of colors, a scene of breathtaking beauty, yet also bone-chillingly cold.

“Moreover, do you really think I would help Venerable Tianji?”

The black-robed cultivator was taken aback. “Sect Master, you mean…”

“I know Venerable Tianji too well. He’s never one to suffer a loss.”

Venerable Xuanbing’s voice was cold, as cold as the wind outside the window. “His agreement to give us 30% now is merely a temporary measure. Once Ten Thousand Demon Ridge is destroyed, he will definitely turn his back on us.

At that time, let alone 30%, we might not even get 10%. Perhaps, he will even turn his sword against us.”

“Then why should we send troops?”

“Because of the opportunity.”

A cold glint flashed in Venerable Xuanbing's eyes. "After Ten Thousand Demon Ridge is destroyed, Tianji Palace will also be severely weakened. At that time, I will seize the opportunity to destroy Tianji Palace.

All of Tianji Palace's resources, including that supreme treasure, will be ours. This is the real opportunity, killing two birds with one stone."

The black-robed cultivator's expression changed. "Sect Master, are you going to make an enemy of Tianji Palace?"

"To be an enemy of the Heavenly Pole Palace?"

Venerable Xuanbing sneered. "The Heavenly Pole Palace has never been our friend. When the Divine Race suppressed our Ice God lineage, did the Heavenly Pole Palace ever utter a word of help? Did

those high and mighty branches of the Divine Race ever even glance at us? Now they want to use us, so I will play along and let them reap what they sow."

He turned around, looking at the black-clad cultivator, his eyes sharp as knives. "Pass down the order, have all disciples prepare. One month from now, you will accompany me on the expedition. Remember, when you reach the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, do not fight desperately; conserve your strength. We will strike when the Heavenly Pole Palace and the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge are both weakened. What I want is final victory." "

Yes!"

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Heavenly Saint Palace, Holy Light Hall.

Venerable Holy Light sat cross-legged on a futon, a golden sphere of light floating before him—the Eye of Holy Light.

Countless tiny points of light flowed within the sphere; these were the Heavenly Saint Palace's intelligence network, covering most of the Northern Region.

He was investigating the situation at Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, the Heavenly Pole Palace, and even the movements of the Divine Abyss Pavilion.

"Palace Master, news has come from the Heavenly Pole Palace that they will send troops in a month." A cultivator in a white robe entered the hall and bowed.

The Holy Light Venerable opened his eyes, a slight smile playing on his lips. "A month? The Heavenly Pole Venerable is truly impatient. It seems that the supreme treasure has indeed made him restless."

"Palace Master, should we really help the Heavenly Pole Palace?" the cultivator asked.

"Help?"

The Holy Light Venerable laughed, a hint of mockery in his smile. "Why should I help the Heavenly Pole Palace? I just want a share. The Heavenly Pole Venerable promised fifty percent of the benefits, so I'll take fifty percent. As for the fate of the Heavenly Pole Palace, what does it have to do with me?"

He stood up, walked to the window, and gazed at the Holy Light Ridge outside.

Sunlight shone on the white palace, reflecting a dazzling light; the entire Heavenly Saint Palace resembled a fairyland built in the clouds.

"That ancient treasure surpasses even the Golden Immortal realm. If I could obtain it, my cultivation would break through to the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

At that time, what would the Heavenly Extreme Palace be? What would the Divine Abyss Pavilion be? The entire Northern Region would be my possession.

Those who once looked down on the Heavenly Saint Palace, I would make them all kneel at my feet."

The Holy Light Venerable's ambition was even greater than that of the Profound Ice Venerable.

"But Palace Master, Venerable Tianji promised to give us fifty percent. Will he honor that promise?"

Venerable Saint Light sneered. "I know Venerable Tianji too well. His promise to give us fifty percent now is just a temporary measure.

Once Ten Thousand Demon Ridge is destroyed, he will definitely turn his back on us. Therefore, I will not really fight for him. If he wants to fight, let him fight. I will only provide the work, not the effort."

"Then what does Palace Master mean?"

"Preserve our strength." Venerable Saint Light said calmly. "We will make our move after Tianji Palace and Ten Thousand Demon Ridge have fought to a standstill. By then, neither Tianji Palace nor Ten Thousand Demon Ridge will be our match. What I want is to reap the benefits without lifting a finger."

He turned around, looked at the cultivator, and a shrewd glint flashed in his eyes. "Pass down the order to have the disciples prepare, but don't tell them they are going to war. Just say… they are going for training. Have everyone bring their best magical artifacts, but don't make a fuss. I want to catch Venerable Tianji off guard."

"Yes!"

The three major divine races hadn't even set off yet, but their thoughts were already divided, a stark contrast to the two thousand cultivators of the Myriad Demon Ridge who were united against a common enemy.

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Heavenly Extreme Palace, Main Hall. The Heavenly

Extreme Venerable sat on his throne, his fingers lightly tapping the armrest, one tap after another.

Four Golden Immortal elders stood before him, each with a solemn expression.

"Palace Master, everything is ready," Elder Zhao said, clasping his hands in a fist salute. "The two thousand elite troops have assembled and are ready to depart at any time. Armor, weapons, pills, and talismans have all been distributed, and every cultivator is in peak condition."

"What about the Divine Abyss Pavilion?" the Heavenly Extreme Venerable asked.

"Venerable Xuanbing has replied; five hundred cultivators have assembled and will join us in half a month. They cultivate ice-based techniques, excelling in control, and can serve as support on the battlefield."

"What about the Heavenly Saint Palace?"

"Venerable Shengguang agreed to send eight hundred troops, but demanded the spoils be divided after the battle. His disciples cultivate light-based magic, specializing in ranged attacks and healing, and can provide fire support on the battlefield."

Venerable Tianji sneered, "Venerable Shengguang is indeed an old fox. Dividing the spoils after the battle—he wants to see who wins and who loses. If we win, he takes fifty percent;

if we lose, he loses nothing. A truly shrewd calculation. However, I don't intend to let him take it for free."

"Palace Master, what should we do then?" Elder Qian asked.

"What should we do?" Venerable Tianji stood up. "Fight. No matter what they think, our goal is Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. As long as we conquer Ten Thousand Demon Ridge and obtain that supreme treasure, nothing else matters. In the end, whoever has the strongest fist will get more."

He walked to the sand table and pointed to the location of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. "Half a month later, the entire army will launch an attack. I will personally lead the team to flatten Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. Remember, our target is that purple divine soul. Whoever obtains that divine soul will be richly rewarded."

"Yes!" the four elders responded in unison. …

Preparations for the battle at Wan Yao Ridge continued intensively.

Every day, demon warriors arrived from all directions, and every moment, defensive barriers were reinforced and array patterns were redrawn.

Disciples of the Guiyuan Sect set up hundreds of early warning arrays in the Misty Forest, sword cultivators of the Qingyun Sword Sect established sword arrays on the peaks on both sides of the mountain gate, and sorcerers of the Wanfa Sect inscribed layers of defensive runes around the Demon Emperor's Palace.

The entire Wan Yao Ridge resembled a colossal beast awakening, baring its fangs, awaiting the impending storm.

But Qingqiu harbored a persistent doubt.

She sat in a side hall, holding an ancient scroll in her hands.

It was a sect secret record brought by Guiyuanzi from the Guiyuan Sect; the animal hide cover was yellowed and brittle, the edges severely worn, clearly having withstood countless years.

The pages were made of a special kind of spiritual silk, densely covered with tiny characters, recording the life stories, cultivation insights, and ascension records of the Guiyuan Sect's successive patriarchs.

She read through them for a long time, from the first patriarch to the fifth, examining each page carefully, not missing a single detail.

She wanted to know why that white-robed old man—the patriarch of the Guiyuan Sect—had become the guardian of the Chaos Secret Realm.

How many years had he been guarding it?

Was what he was guarding truly just a pool of chaotic spiritual liquid?

Finally, in the last chapter of the scroll, she found a vague record.

"The third patriarch of the Guiyuan Sect, whose Daoist name was 'Xuanqing,' ascended to heaven 38,000 years ago. On the day of his ascension, auspicious clouds descended from the sky, golden lotuses sprang from the earth, and cultivators within a radius of ten thousand miles all sensed the pressure of the Heavenly Dao. Spiritual beasts knelt in submission, vegetation shone brightly, and the world was filled with peace.

However, after his ascension, the patriarch disappeared without a trace. Later generations tried to contact him using the sect's secret methods, but all attempts were in vain, like stones sinking into the sea. Some say the patriarch ascended to a higher celestial realm, while others say he perished in a heavenly tribulation. Opinions vary, and

no consensus is reached. The entire Guiyuan Sect laments this loss, and on every ancestral worship day, they burn incense and pray, hoping that the patriarch's spirit in heaven will protect the sect for eternity."

Qingqiu put down the ancient book, his brow furrowed.

Patriarch Xuanqing ascended 38,000 years ago, yet now he appears in the Chaos Secret Realm, becoming a guardian.

Was his ascension a hoax, and his entry into the secret realm the real one?

Or did he return to the lower realm after his ascension?

What exactly happened in between?

What could have driven a powerful being who had already ascended to immortality to willingly lower his cultivation, guarding a small secret realm and a pool of spiritual liquid, waiting for 38,000 years?

She pondered for a moment, repeatedly considering various possibilities in her mind, then shook her head.

With only fragments of information from ancient texts, she couldn't reconstruct the truth of what happened back then.

She needed more information; she needed to ask that white-robed elder herself.

She stood up and walked out of the side hall.

The morning light of Wan Yao Ridge shone on her white dress, casting a long shadow.

The morning mist hadn't completely dissipated, shimmering faintly golden in the sunlight.

She walked through several long corridors and arrived at Gui Yuanzi's residence.

Gui Yuanzi's residence was a small stone chamber, very clean.

A stone bed, a stone table, a stone chair, and a portrait of the founder of the Gui Yuan Sect hanging on the wall.

Gui Yuanzi was sitting cross-legged on a futon, healing his injuries. Azure spiritual energy flowed slowly around him, like threads of azure silk, repairing his broken bones and damaged meridians.

Hearing footsteps, he opened his eyes and saw Qingqiu. He quickly rose and bowed.

“Your Majesty, what brings you here? Is there news from the front lines?”

“No.” Qingqiu waved his hand, handing him an ancient book. “Take a look at this section.”

Gui Yuanzi took the book and quickly scanned it.

His gaze lingered on the words, his expression growing increasingly grave. Finally, his brow furrowed, and fine beads of sweat appeared on his forehead.

“Ancestor Xuanqing…ascended 38,000 years ago? But the one we saw in the secret realm was clearly the Ancestor himself.

His whisk, his Dao patterns, his aura—none of it could be faked.

I grew up in the Guiyuan Sect and have seen the portrait of the sect’s ancestor countless times. I could draw the Dao patterns on that whisk with my eyes closed. There’s absolutely no way I could mistake him.” ”

Therefore, I suspect that the so-called ‘ascension’ is nothing but a facade.” Qingqiu’s voice was soft, but every word carried weight, echoing in the silent stone chamber.

“Ancestor Xuanqing didn’t leave the Seventeenth Heaven at all, but entered the Chaos Secret Realm and became its guardian.

There must be a reason he's guarding it. Perhaps, something more important than the Chaos Spirit Liquid is hidden in that secret realm, perhaps he's waiting for someone, perhaps he's protecting some secret. We must find out."

Guiyuanzi raised his head, looking at Qingqiu, his eyes filled with shock and doubt. "Your Majesty, you mean…"

"I will go to the Chaos Secret Realm again." Qingqiu's tone was unquestionable, leaving no room for negotiation. "This time, I will go personally. You lead the way."

Guiyuanzi hesitated for a moment.

His injuries hadn't fully healed; his left arm was still in a sling, and although the broken bones in his chest had been set, he couldn't exert any force.

Moreover, the guardian's cultivation was unfathomable; last time, he had been severely injured by a single palm strike and almost died.

If he were to fight again this time, he didn't know if he would survive.

"Your Majesty, that guardian's cultivation is unfathomable, I'm worried…"

"Worried about what?" Qingqiu interrupted him, her voice carrying a hint of arrogance. "I've lived for tens of thousands of years, what storms haven't I weathered? A guardian at the peak of the third rank of Golden Immortal can't frighten me.

Besides, I'm a demon, my cultivation method is different from his, he won't attack on sight. We're going to talk, not fight."

She paused, then added, "Moreover, I sense that the guardian has no ill intentions towards us. He injured you last time because you attacked first. If you hadn't attacked, he wouldn't have attacked first. I can see that."

Guiyuanzi was silent for a moment, repeatedly recalling the scene in the hall that day.

The white-robed elder indeed didn't attack first; he attacked first, and the elder retaliated.

Moreover, the elder could have killed him, but he didn't.

What did this mean?

It meant that the elder had no intention of killing them, but was simply upholding his duty, not allowing anyone to easily take the spiritual liquid.

He nodded, "Alright." ...

An Dao and Ling Yue had been guarding the mountaintop of the Cangmang Mountains for several days.

The high altitude offered a wide view, allowing them to clearly see the entrance to the Chaos Secret Realm.

They had set up a concealment array on the mountaintop, completely concealing their aura and blending into the surrounding vegetation.

From a distance, it appeared as a barren mountain, completely unremarkable.

The two took turns resting, constantly watching the entrance to the secret realm, not daring to relax for a moment.

During the day, the view was clear, and any movement was easily observed.

At night, the mountain was bitterly cold, with howling winds and pitch-black darkness, forcing them to rely solely on their divine sense.

They dared not extend their divine sense too far, fearing detection by passing demonic beasts or cultivators, and could only cautiously probe within a hundred feet of their surroundings.

Apart from Gui Yuanzi's visit, no one else had ever entered.

Ling Yue leaned against the stone wall, wrapped her gray cloak tighter around herself, yawning, utterly bored.

She had been squatting on this hilltop for several days, her robes rumpled, her hair disheveled, and her face weary.

"Do you think Gui Yuanzi will come again?" she asked softly.

An Dao didn't speak, only staring intently at the entrance to the secret realm, his eyes unblinking.

His hands gripped the hilt of his sword, his knuckles slightly white from the pressure, his entire being like a fully drawn bow, ready to explode at any moment.

He was a top assassin of the Void Merchant Guild, having carried out countless surveillance missions, never letting his guard down because of boredom.

Ling Yue sighed, "Your mouth is truly hard to open. In all these years of partnering with you, I can count the number of words you've spoken on one hand."

Just then, two figures appeared on the distant horizon.

One after the other, they flew towards the entrance of the secret realm.

Ling Yue's body tensed abruptly, her eyes fixed on the two approaching figures.

The figure in front wore a blue Daoist robe, a long sword at his waist, and his left arm draped across his chest—it was Gui Yuanzi.

His flight speed was slow, clearly indicating that his injuries had not fully healed.

The figure behind him wore a long white dress, had ink-black hair, and a cold demeanor, surrounded by a faint white aura—it was none other than the Demon Emperor Qingqiu.

An Dao's pupils contracted slightly. "They've arrived."

Ling Yue quickly perked up, taking out a warm, smooth communication jade slip from her bosom and probing it with her divine sense.

Countless tiny runes appeared on the jade slip. She composed herself and quickly wrote: "Guild Leader, Gui Yuanzi has brought the Demon Emperor Qingqiu back into the Chaos Secret Realm. The two seemed to be in a hurry, as if they had come prepared. Please give instructions."

A moment later, Wu Heng's reply was only two words: "Keep an eye on them."

Ling Yue put away the jade slip and continued watching the two figures disappear through the stone gate of the secret realm.

Qingqiu and Gui Yuanzi passed through the stone gate and stepped into the Chaos Secret Realm.

Grayish-white mist surged all around, so thick it was almost tangible.

The mist contained fragments of chaotic laws, sharp as knives, constantly eroding the intruders' spiritual energy shields.

A faint white spiritual light shone around Qingqiu—the primordial power of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox, gentle yet resilient, keeping the mist at bay.

Guiyuanzi walked ahead, his azure longsword constantly drawn, its blade shimmering with a faint spiritual light, vigilantly watching his surroundings.

“This is it,” Guiyuanzi murmured, his voice echoing in the empty space, carrying a hint of suppressed awe.

“Last time we reached this point, we were stopped by the guardian. That guardian is in the main hall. His cultivation is unfathomable; one palm strike severely injured me. If he hadn’t shown mercy, I probably would have perished there.”

Qingqiu nodded, remaining silent, and continued forward.

The pale golden gate still stood silently, radiating a soft light.

The light on the gate rippled gently like water, carrying an indescribable warmth and tranquility.

Qingqiu stood before the gate of light, closed her eyes, and sensed the aura within.

After a moment, she opened her eyes, a knowing glint in them.

“This is the Daoist essence, gentle and inclusive, without a trace of hostility. The person who set up this gate of light possesses a very high level of spiritual cultivation. Go in; nothing will happen.”

She stepped inside first.

Behind the gate was a grand hall.

The hall was vast, hundreds of feet in circumference, its dome inlaid with countless luminous crystals, illuminating the entire hall.

Dozens of stone pillars stood on either side of the hall, their surfaces engraved with chaotic runes.

At the far end of the hall was a high platform.

On the platform sat a jade pool. The pool was small, only three feet square, filled with a milky-white liquid that emitted a gentle glow.

Beside the jade pool stood an old man in white robes.

He held a whisk, his white hair flowing, his face aged yet exuding a detached, otherworldly tranquility.

His eyes were bright, as bright as the stars in the sky, or like a bottomless abyss, making it impossible to see through his thoughts.

A faint spiritual light flowed over his white robes, like a thin mist, blending him into his surroundings.

He looked at Qingqiu, a slight smile playing on his lips.

“The demon race? Interesting. I’ve guarded this place for tens of thousands of years, and this is the first time I’ve seen a demon race set foot here. You are the first.”

Qingqiu stopped, clasped his hands in a respectful bow, his posture both respectful and dignified. “Junior Qingqiu, Demon Emperor of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. This is Guiyuanzi, the Sect Master of Guiyuan Sect. Senior should have already met him.”

The white-robed elder glanced at Guiyuanzi and nodded slightly. “I remember you. Last time you came, you desperately protected the divine soul in your arms, refusing to back down. You are stronger than your master.

Your master was too steady, too cautious, never doing anything out of line in his entire life. But you, you dare to fight, dare to take risks, dare to fight me for an outsider.”

He paused, then added, “In this respect, you are stronger than many others.”

Gui Yuanzi’s eyes reddened slightly, but he remained silent.

The white-robed elder looked at Qing Qiu again, his gaze scrutinizing him from head to toe. “Why has the Demon Emperor come in person? Is it to avenge this brat?”

Qing Qiu didn’t beat around the bush. “Senior, this junior wants to know, why did you become the guardian of this Chaos Secret Realm? Shouldn’t you have ascended 38,000 years ago?”

The white-robed elder’s smile froze.

He remained silent for a long time, as if lost in distant memories.

His gaze deepened, his pupils seeming to hold the flow of time, traversing 38,000 years to return to that distant era.

The surrounding mist seemed to sense his emotional fluctuations, slowly churning and emitting a low hum.

“I did indeed ascend. Thirty-eight thousand years ago, I successfully ascended in the back mountains of the Guiyuan Sect. Auspicious clouds descended from the sky, golden lotuses sprang from the earth, and all things shone with glory.

I thought that was the end of cultivation, the perfection of the path, the destination that all cultivators dream of. With a heart full of passion, I stepped into a higher celestial realm.”

He raised his head, looking at the dome of the hall, as if he could see the world above through the rocks.

“But after ascending, I discovered that the world above was not what I wanted. There were no traditions, no inheritances, only endless strife and slaughter.

The strong were respected, the weak were prey; there was no morality, no compassion, only naked survival of the fittest.

My Dao heart almost collapsed there. I could not accept such a world.”

“My Dao is about protection, not slaughter. My sword is for protecting all living beings, not for slaughtering my own kind.

But in that world, only the strong can survive; only by constantly becoming stronger and constantly killing can one avoid being eliminated. I cannot do it, nor do I want to.”

His voice was low and slightly hoarse. “So I lowered my cultivation and returned to the Seventeenth Heaven. But the Heavenly Dao is flawed; after returning, my cultivation could never return to its peak, remaining only at the peak of the Third Grade Golden Immortal.

I originally wanted to return to the Yuan Sect to continue teaching, but my cultivation is no longer what it used to be, and my appearance has changed. Returning would only bring trouble to the sect and even attract the covetous eyes of those who covet it.”

“I had nowhere to go, and by chance I found this Chaos Secret Realm. When I entered this Chaos Secret Realm, there was a guardian here. He asked me to guard this Chaos Spirit Liquid and wait for a suitable person.”

“Of course I refused, but he said that this Chaos Spirit Liquid was related to the prosperity of the Dao Sect, so I agreed.”

Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi were stunned. Neither of them expected that tens of thousands of years ago, someone would already know about the present situation.

“Ancestor, the young master has the Great Luo Golden Scripture and needs the Chaos Spirit Liquid to reshape his physical body, so why did you stop me?”

Guiyuanzi asked, puzzled.

The white-robed elder smiled faintly: “If he truly possesses the Great Luo Golden Scripture, then let him obtain the spiritual elixir himself. No one can do it for him.”

Gui Yuanzi stared blankly at the white-robed elder, then looked down at the jade bottle in his arms, caught in a dilemma.

Qingqiu's brows furrowed tightly, a hint of anger flashing in her amber eyes, but she didn't react—she knew that this elder wasn't making things difficult, but rather upholding his principles.

"Ancestor, the young master only has a wisp of divine soul left, without even a physical body. How can he obtain the spiritual elixir? Aren't you making things unnecessarily difficult for him?"

Gui Yuanzi's voice trembled slightly, filled with barely suppressed anxiety.

The white-robed elder smiled faintly, flicked his whisk gently, and said unhurriedly, "If he truly possesses the Great Luo Golden Scripture and is the hope of our Daoist sect, then there is certainly a way.

I am merely following the rules. When that senior entrusted this Chaos Secret Realm to me, he said, 'Only the successor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture can personally retrieve the spiritual liquid; no one else can do it for him.' I have guarded it for 38,000 years; I cannot let him break the rules."

Gui Yuanzi opened his mouth, wanting to say something more, but was interrupted by the jade bottle in his arms.

A weak yet firm voice came from the jade bottle: "Gui Yuanzi, let me out. I will try."

The voice was very soft, as soft as a whisper in the wind, but every word carried an undeniable power.

Gui Yuanzi looked down at the jade bottle in his arms and saw the purple divine soul within the bottle light up slightly. Although the light was dim, it exuded a stubbornness.

"Young Master, but you..." Gui Yuanzi hesitated.

Kai had only a wisp of his soul left, unable even to circulate basic spiritual energy properly. How could he possibly obtain the spiritual liquid?

The mist in this Chaotic Secret Realm was mixed with fragments of chaotic laws; an ordinary soul would be eroded and dissipated in an instant.

He was worried about the young master's safety.

"Guiyuanzi, let me out,"

Kai's voice rang out again, this time more resolute. "I didn't get this far by luck. Since the ancestor has set the rules, I will follow them. Let me out."

Guiyuanzi gritted his teeth and turned to look at Qingqiu.

Qingqiu was silent for a moment, then nodded slightly.

There was also worry in her eyes, but she knew Kai was right.

With the rules in place, there was no turning back.

Guiyuanzi took a deep breath, his hands trembling slightly, and slowly opened the lid of the jade bottle.

A wisp of pale purple soul slowly floated out of the bottle, hovering in mid-air.

The soul was very weak, its purple light dim, like a candle flickering in the wind, ready to be extinguished at any moment.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture flickered faintly around the divine soul, a thin layer barely protecting it from the erosion of the mist.

Gui Yuanzi's eyes instantly reddened.

Qingqiu's fingers clenched slightly, her nails digging into her palms.

She didn't speak, but her heart also clenched.

She had lived for tens of thousands of years, witnessing countless deaths and deaths, but at this moment, she felt an inexplicable unease.

The white-robed elder looked at the swaying purple divine soul, his gaze slightly narrowing.

He extended his divine sense, carefully sensing the aura within the divine soul.

After a moment, a flicker of emotion flashed in his eyes.

"Indeed... it's the aura of the Great Luo Golden Scripture. Thirty-eight thousand years, I've finally waited for it."

He murmured, his voice carrying a hint of emotion, a hint of relief, and a barely perceptible expectation.

But then, his brows furrowed slightly.

"But your soul is far too weak. The chaotic spiritual liquid in the Spirit Pool contains extremely rich primordial power. Even the physical body of an ordinary cultivator would be devoured by the spiritual power if it touched it, let alone you who only have a wisp of soul left. Are you sure you want to try?"

Kai's soul glowed slightly. Although the purple light was weak, it exuded a reassuring firmness. "Yes. Please open the restrictions on the Spirit Pool, Ancestor. I will do it myself."

The white-robed elder was silent for a moment, then nodded. "Alright. I won't stop you. But I must remind you that the spiritual liquid in the Spirit Pool will not harm you on its own, but if you enter with your soul body, the primordial power in the spiritual liquid will spontaneously surge into your soul.

If you cannot withstand it, at best your soul will be damaged, at worst your soul will be scattered. Think it over."

Gui Yuanzi's face turned deathly pale instantly. "Ancestor, the young master..."

"Let him try." Qing Qiu's voice interrupted Gui Yuanzi. She looked at the purple soul, her eyes filled with complex emotions. "He is not the kind of person who would back down." The white-robed elder waved his hand, and the restrictions above the jade pool slowly dissipated. Ripples spread across the surface of the milky-white spiritual liquid, radiating an even more intense light.

The light was warm and gentle, yet carried an indescribable weight, as if the entire world contained within it.

Kai's soul slowly drifted towards the jade pool. He flew very slowly, the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture flowing around him, barely keeping the mist at bay.

With each inch forward, he felt an invisible pressure squeezing his soul, as if countless hands were pulling him, trying to tear him apart.

Gui Yuanzi's hand rested on the hilt of his sword. He dared not speak, dared not move, and even his breathing unconsciously became soft.

His eyes were fixed on the purple soul, not daring to blink.

Qing Qiu stood to the side, her white robes as white as snow, her long hair as black as ink, her amber eyes reflecting the swaying purple light.

She slightly raised her hand, then lowered it again. She could not help; this was Kai's own trial.

The white-robed elder watched silently, his whisk hanging gently at his side, his face expressionless.

Kai's soul finally floated above the jade pool.

The light of the spiritual liquid shone on him, the milky white and purple light intertwining, making his swaying ball of light flicker.

He hovered above the spiritual liquid, able to feel the dense, almost tangible primordial power below, like a bottomless ocean, quietly waiting to devour all intruders.

Without hesitation, he slowly sank down.

The moment his soul touched the spiritual liquid, a vast power surged from all directions, enveloping him entirely.

That power was not an attack, not a compression, but an influx.

The primordial power in the chaotic spiritual liquid, as if finding a vessel, frantically poured into Kai's soul at an unbelievable speed.

Kai's soul trembled violently, the purple light suddenly surging and then dimming, as if engaged in a fierce battle with that power.

His soul trembled violently in the spiritual liquid, emitting a low, buzzing sound filled with pain, struggle, and defiance.

Gui Yuanzi's face turned deathly pale, and he took a sudden step forward. "Young Master!"

"Don't move."

The white-robed elder's voice was calm but undeniable. "This is the process of the spiritual liquid merging with his soul. He is currently using his soul to absorb the primal power within the spiritual liquid. If he can't withstand it, no one can save him. Going up will only interfere with him."

Gui Yuanzi's foot froze in mid-air.

His fists clenched so tightly they cracked, his nails digging into his palms, blood dripping from between his fingers.

He gritted his teeth, his eyes red-rimmed, but dared not take another step forward.

Qing Qiu placed his hand on Gui Yuanzi's shoulder and patted it gently. "Trust him."

In the jade pool, Kai's soul was experiencing unimaginable pain.

The primal power in the spiritual liquid was too concentrated, and the influx was too rapid; his soul simply couldn't digest it in time.

Those forces surged and crashed through his soul like raging rivers, threatening to tear his already fragile soul apart.

Fine cracks began to appear at the edges of his soul, purple light spilling out from them like a glass lamp on the verge of shattering.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture desperately tried to mend the cracks, but the incoming power was too great and too fast; the repair could not keep up with the rate of shattering.

"Ah—" An invisible roar echoed from the depths of his soul, a cry from the very soul, silent yet shaking the entire hall.

Gui Yuanzi's tears finally fell. "Young Master…Young Master, hold on…"

Qingqiu's lips trembled slightly, her hand sliding off Gui Yuanzi's shoulder and clenching into a fist.

She didn't speak, but her eyes were filled with heartache.

Just as Kai's soul was about to give way, the Great Luo Golden Scripture deep within his sea of consciousness suddenly shone brightly.

It wasn't the faint light from before, but a dazzling, scorching, sun-like golden radiance.

The light surged from the depths of Kai's soul, transforming into countless golden threads that firmly enveloped it.

The shattered cracks were stitched together by the golden threads, and the surging primal power was guided by them, flowing slowly within his soul, no longer rampaging.

The Great Luo Golden Scripture was helping him refine the primal power within the spiritual liquid.

Kai felt a warm current spreading through his soul, no longer in pain, but instead experiencing an indescribable comfort.

The surging primal power was gradually absorbed, transformed, and fused by the Great Luo Golden Scripture, becoming a part of his soul.

His soul began to solidify, the purple light growing brighter and more stable. The

previously volatile ball of light gradually coalesced into a human form, with facial features, limbs, and torso becoming clear.

Gui Yuanzi's eyes widened. "Young Master... Young Master's soul is solidifying!"

A glimmer of light also flashed in Qingqiu's eyes.

She sensed it; the power of the Great Luo Golden Scripture was awakening.

The white-robed elder's brow twitched slightly, a hint of surprise flashing in his eyes. "The Great Luo Golden Scripture... truly a treasure of the Ancestral Master. It's helping the divine soul refine the primordial power within the spiritual liquid; such spirituality is something I've never seen before."

The spiritual liquid in the jade pool decreased at a visible rate.

The milky-white liquid continuously flowed into Kai's divine soul, being refined and absorbed by the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

Kai's divine soul became increasingly solid, the purple light grew brighter, and his entire outline became clearer.

Gui Yuanzi knelt on the ground, hands clasped together, lips trembling incessantly, whether in prayer or chanting something, it was unclear.

Qing Qiu stood to the side, her gaze never leaving the jade pool. Her eyes were filled with worry, but also with hope.

Finally, the last drop of spiritual liquid was absorbed by Kai's divine soul.

The jade pool was empty, not a single drop remaining.

The purple divine soul floated above the jade pool, radiating a warm, gentle light.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture flowed around the divine soul, intertwining with the purple light to form a perfect cocoon of light.

The aura within the cocoon was many times stronger than before; it was an indescribable power, neither pure spiritual energy nor pure divine soul power, but a perfect fusion of the two.

Gui Yuanzi stared blankly at the cocoon of light, his lips trembling, and after a long while, he managed to squeeze out a sentence: "It...it's done?"

The white-robed elder stepped forward, stood by the jade pool, looked at the cocoon of light, and remained silent for a long time.

Then, he turned around, looked at Gui Yuanzi and Qing Qiu, and a slight smile appeared on his lips.

“Not bad. The successor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture has indeed not disappointed me. He took the Chaos Spirit Liquid.”

He paused, then added, “Once he finishes absorbing it, the reconstruction of his physical body will be just around the corner. My mission can be considered complete.”

After speaking, he turned around, his figure gradually dissipating into the mist, leaving behind a faint sentence: “Tell that brat that the future of the Daoist sect depends on him.”

Gui Yuanzi knelt down with a thud and kowtowed three times in the direction where the white-robed elder had disappeared. “Ancestor, rest assured, your subordinate will definitely protect the young master!”

Qingqiu stood beside the cocoon of light, reaching out to gently touch its surface.

The cocoon of light was as warm as jade, radiating a faint warmth, like a new life quietly being nurtured.

” Kai, you must wake up,” she whispered.

Within the cocoon of light, a purple light flickered slightly, as if responding to her. Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi led Kai out of the secret realm!

An Dao and Ling Yue, seeing Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi emerge, immediately sent a message to Wu Heng.

“Guild Leader, they’re out. They both looked hurried, and Guiyuanzi’s arms were bulging; he must be carrying something important.”

Less than half an hour later, Wu Heng personally led his men to the Cangmang Mountains.

He brought ten Golden Immortal Level 1 experts, plus An Dao and Ling Yue, a total of thirteen, who surrounded Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi.

The thirteen Golden Immortal auras intertwined, like an invisible mountain, causing the surrounding mist to churn.

The thirteen people were positioned strategically: three in front, seven behind, and one on each side blocking their escape route, forming an impenetrable encirclement.

Wu Heng stood at the very front, dressed in a black robe, a smile playing on his lips, but one filled with greed.

His eyes were fixed on the storage ring in Guiyuanzi's arms, as if he could already see the Chaos Spirit Liquid inside.

He had worked for the Void Merchant Guild for so many years and had seen countless rare treasures, but he had only ever seen a treasure of the level of Chaos Spirit Liquid once in his entire life.

"Your Majesty, Demon Emperor, Sect Master Guiyuan, please wait." His voice was not loud, but every word carried an air of unyielding authority.

Qingqiu's eyes narrowed, a cold glint flashing in his amber pupils. "President Wu, what is the meaning of this? I must hurry back to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge; I have no time for idle chatter."

Wu Heng smiled. "Your Majesty need not be nervous. I merely wish to know what treasures you two obtained in the secret realm? Chaos Spirit Liquid, that is a supreme treasure of the heavens, appearing only once in ten thousand years. I also wish to have a share; I wonder if Your Majesty would grant me this favor?"

Guiyuanzi's face darkened, his hand unconsciously resting on the hilt of his sword. "President Wu, the Chaos Elixir was obtained with our lives, why should we share it with you? We risked our lives in the secret realm, while you wait outside to reap the benefits? There's no such thing as a free lunch!"

"Why should I?"

Wu Heng's smile deepened, a smile tinged with the shrewdness and calculation characteristic of a businessman. "Based on the strength of the Void Merchant Guild. Based on the ten Golden Immortals I have. Sect Master Guiyuan, a wise man submits to circumstances.

Hand over the Chaos Elixir, and I can give you half. Keep the other half, enough for the young master to rebuild his physical body. Let's each take a step back and avoid making things difficult for each other. If you don't hand it over..."

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

His hand was already on the magic weapon at his waist, and the ten Golden Immortals behind him stepped forward in unison, their auras surging.

Qing Qiu sneered, his voice full of mockery. "President Wu, are you threatening me? You've been the president of the Void Merchant Guild for thousands of years, don't you know what the consequences are for threatening a demon emperor?"

"I wouldn't dare."

Wu Heng clasped his hands in a humble posture, but the greed in his eyes was undisguised. "I'm merely reminding Your Majesty that discretion is the better part of valor. We're still a thousand miles from the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. One of you is severely injured, and the other has exhausted most of your spiritual energy. Can you really return safely?"

Qingqiu remained silent.

She raised her right hand, her fingers spread, and a white spiritual light surged from her palm.

The light grew brighter and more dazzling, transforming into a gigantic phantom of a nine-tailed celestial fox. The phantom was ten zhang tall, its nine tails swaying gently behind it, each tail shimmering with a

different color—red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, blue, purple, gold, and silver.

The nine colors intertwined, dyeing the surrounding mist with vibrant hues.

The nine-tailed celestial fox phantom opened its maw, letting out a silent roar.

The roar was silent, but an invisible shockwave of divine souls surged forth like a tsunami, causing the surrounding mist to churn violently. Even the ten Golden Immortals behind Wu Heng involuntarily took a step back.

“Want to snatch the Chaos Spirit Liquid? Then make your move. I want to see just how much a Golden Immortal from the Void Merchant Guild really weighs.”

Wu Heng’s expression changed. He hadn’t expected Qing Qiu to be so forceful, much less that she would attack without a word.

In his expectations, Qing Qiu would weigh the pros and cons, at least try to negotiate.

But she didn’t; she turned hostile immediately.

He gritted his teeth and waved his hand. “Take them down!”

The ten Golden Immortals attacked simultaneously.

Golden, silver, cyan, and crimson spiritual light intertwined, like ferocious dragons, hurtling towards Qing Qiu and Gui Yuanzi.

The combined attack of ten first-grade Golden Immortals was powerful enough to level a mountain.

Qing Qiu did not retreat.

She activated the illusory image of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox, its nine tails lighting up simultaneously. The nine colors of light converged, transforming into a nine-colored pillar of light that met the combined attack of the ten Golden Immortals.

Boom!

A deafening roar shook the entire mountain range.

The nine-colored pillar of light blocked all ten attacks, the aftershocks sweeping outwards and forcing Wu Heng back several steps.

The surrounding mist was torn apart by the shockwave, revealing a gray sky.

The ground cracked, rubble flew everywhere, and nothing grew within a hundred feet.

Qingqiu's face paled slightly, a trace of blood trickling from the corner of her mouth.

The injuries she sustained at the hands of the Heavenly Venerable hadn't fully healed, and this time, forcibly activating the illusory image of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox had aggravated her injuries.

But her figure remained upright, her eyes still resolute.

Guiyuanzi wasn't idle either. He drew his cyan longsword and slashed at Wu Heng.

The sword light was sharp, carrying the sword intent passed down through generations of the Guiyuan Sect, aimed directly at Wu Heng's throat.

Wu Heng dodged to the side, then struck Gui Yuanzi's chest with a backhand palm.

Gui Yuanzi raised his sword to parry, but was forced back several steps, a trickle of blood spilling from the corner of his mouth.

His injuries were not yet healed, and this blow aggravated his old wounds.

The ten Golden Immortals attacked again, this time with even greater coordination.

Three in front, seven behind, their attacks continuous and seamless.

Qingqiu, a third-rank Golden Immortal, could fight ten against one, but the sheer number of opponents and their perfect teamwork caused her spiritual energy to deplete rapidly.

“Gui Yuanzi, go!”

Qingqiu shouted, and the phantom of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox suddenly swelled, its nine tails sweeping out simultaneously, forcing the ten Golden Immortals back.

Each of the nine tails was ten zhang long, and wherever they swept, rocks crumbled and the ground was plowed with deep furrows.

Gui Yuanzi hesitated for a moment, then gritted his teeth and turned to fly towards the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

Wu Heng wanted to give chase, but was blocked by Qingqiu.

His cultivation was only at the second rank of Golden Immortal, no match for Qingqiu.

Qingqiu struck out with a palm, the nine-colored light transforming into a giant hand, sending him flying.

He tumbled several times in the air before crashing heavily to the ground, a trickle of blood escaping from the corner of his mouth.

“Withdraw!” Wu Heng gritted his teeth, reluctantly leading his men away. Qingqiu stood in the void, watching them depart, and let out a long breath.

Her face was ashen, her lips bloodless, and cold sweat streamed down her face.

Using the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox phantom twice had worsened her injuries.

But she couldn’t fall.

She had to go back, she had to see Kai rebuild his physical body.

When Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi returned to Wan Yao Ridge, it was already dark.

Three blazing suns slowly sank below the horizon, dyeing the entire sky golden-red.

The lights of Wan Yao Ridge lit up one by one, like stars scattered across the mountains.

In the square in front of the Demon Emperor’s Palace, demon warriors and cultivators of various races were busy—some reinforcing defenses, some moving supplies, some conversing in hushed tones.

Seeing Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi return, everyone stopped what they were doing, their gazes falling on the jade box in Guiyuanzi’s arms.

No one spoke, but everyone’s eyes held expectation and worry.

Qingqiu didn’t linger, walking straight across the square towards the side hall.

Gui Yuanzi followed closely behind her, clutching the jade box tightly as if it were the most precious thing in the world.

The door to the side hall opened, and a faint fragrance wafted out. Soft animal hides had already been laid out on the warm jade bed in the hall, and two items were placed on the stone platform beside the bed.

One was a piece of black wood, completely black, with fine golden patterns covering its surface, emitting a faint glow.

The other was a jade pool, filled with spiritual spring water drawn from the depths of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge's spiritual veins, crystal clear and brimming with spiritual energy.

The Ancient Soul Wood.

That was the treasure Kai had obtained after risking his life in the Primordial Soul Forest, an indispensable core element for reshaping his physical body.

Gui Yuanzi walked to the warm jade bed, carefully placed the jade box on it, and opened the lid.

The cocoon of light lay quietly in the jade box, its purple-gold light particularly striking in the dim side hall, bathing the entire hall in a warm hue.

Qingqiu walked to the stone platform, picked up the piece of Eternal Soul Wood, and examined it carefully for a moment. The golden patterns on the Soul Wood flowed slowly under the illumination of the spiritual light, as if breathing. She said softly, "Let's begin."

Guiyuanzi took a deep breath, his hands trembling slightly, and took the cocoon of light from the jade box, gently placing it into the jade pool.

The cocoon of light floated above the spiritual spring water, its purplish-gold light intertwining with the clear light of the spring water, like the shimmering surface of a lake at dawn.

Qingqiu placed the Eternal Soul Wood into the jade pool. The Soul Wood sank into the water, slowly melting into countless tiny golden specks of light, drifting in the spiritual spring water like fireflies.

These golden specks of light seemed to have a life of their own, converging towards the cocoon of light, adhering to its surface, layer upon layer.

The cocoon of light began to change. What was originally just a simple ball of light now had fine patterns appearing on its surface, like the meridians of the human body, or like cracks in the earth.

The patterns radiated outwards from the center of the cocoon of light, each faintly glowing and emanating a warm glow.

Gui Yuanzi knelt by the jade pool, his hands clasped together, his lips trembling.

His eyes were red, tears welling up, but he dared not let them fall, fearing to disturb his young master.

Qingqiu stood to the side, her white robes as white as snow, her long hair as black as ink.

Her gaze never left the jade pool, her amber eyes reflecting the light of the cocoon.

Her hands hung at her sides, clenched into fists, her nails digging into her palms, yet she felt no pain.

The cocoon of light floated in the jade pool for three days and three nights.

On the first day, the outline of bones appeared on the surface of the cocoon.

One by one, snow-white as jade, hard as steel, from blurry to clear, from nothingness to substance.

The bones slowly grew in the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, piecing together a complete human skeleton.

Gui Yuanzi counted them; there were exactly two hundred and six pieces, no more, no less, each radiating a faint purple spiritual light.

Qingqiu's brows relaxed slightly.

Skeletal reconstruction was the most crucial step; only with stable bones could the meridians and flesh grow smoothly.

The next day, meridians began to grow on the bones inside the cocoon of light.

One by one, like golden rivers, they spread and intertwined between the bones, connecting every inch together.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture shone through the cocoon, illuminating the meridians and making their patterns clearly visible.

Guiyuanzi recognized several main meridians—the Ren and Du meridians, the twelve regular meridians, and the eight extraordinary meridians—each wider and stronger than any he had ever seen in a cultivator.

"Young Master's meridians… are even stronger than before his physical body was destroyed." Guiyuanzi's voice trembled, but it was the trembling of joy.

Qingqiu nodded, remaining silent.

A glimmer of hope flashed in her eyes.

On the third day, flesh began to grow.

Inch by inch, crimson as the sunset, it covered the bones and meridians, enveloping the entire body into a complete human form.

Muscles, skin, and hair took shape, every inch brimming with explosive power.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture intertwined with the golden specks of the Eternal Soul Wood, forming mysterious patterns on the body's surface—the protective runes of the Daoist sect.

The light cocoon grew brighter and brighter, illuminating the entire side hall.

The demon warriors and cultivators of various races outside the hall couldn't help but look over. Some whispered among themselves, some clasped their hands in prayer, and some gripped their weapons tightly—they knew that their young master was being reborn.

Gui Yuanzi knelt by the jade pool, without closing his eyes or drinking water for three days and three nights.

His lips were cracked, his face pale, but his eyes shone brightly, like stars in the night.

Qingqiu stood beside him, never leaving his side.

Her white dress was stained with some spiritual spring water, and her hair was somewhat disheveled, but she didn't care.

On the morning of the fourth day, the first rays of sunlight streamed in through the window of the side hall.

The light cocoon cracked open.

There was no sound, no loud noise, only a thin crack appearing on the surface of the light cocoon.

The crack stretched from top to bottom, like a golden thread, splitting the cocoon in two.

Gui Yuanzi's breath caught in his throat.

Golden light surged from the crack, sweeping across the entire side hall like a tidal wave.

The light was warm and powerful, carrying an indescribable force—neither pure spiritual power nor pure divine soul power, but a perfect fusion of the two.

Then, the light cocoon shattered completely.

Kai stood in the jade pool, completely naked, his body shimmering with a faint purple spiritual light.

His skin was smooth as jade, his muscles clearly defined, each muscle containing explosive power.

His hair, as black as ink, fell over his shoulders, swaying gently in the spiritual light.

His eyes were closed, his eyelashes trembling slightly, as if he were having a very long dream.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture flowed around him, perfectly merging with his new physical body.

The golden and purple light intertwined, forming mysterious patterns on his body surface—the protective runes of the Daoist sect, and the mark of the Great Luo Golden Scripture recognizing him as its master. Gui Yuanzi's tears finally fell, drop by drop, landing on the cold ground. "Young Master… Young Master… You've finally returned…"

He had waited for this day for far too long.

From Kai's physical body being destroyed, leaving only a wisp of his soul adrift at Gui Yuan Sect, to his journey to Wan Yao Ridge to obtain the Eternal Soul Wood, to the interception by Tianji Venerable and Qingqiu's injury, to the perilous journey through the Chaos Secret Realm to retrieve the Spirit Liquid—every step was arduous, every step was fraught with danger.

But he never gave up.

Qingqiu stood to the side, watching Kai in the jade pool, a slight smile playing on her lips.

The smile was faint, yet it carried an indescribable tenderness.

She had lived for tens of thousands of years, witnessed countless partings and deaths, seen countless geniuses rise and fall, but at this moment, she felt an indescribable sense of relief.

Relieved that Bai Qian had met him.

Relieved that he hadn't died in the wasteland.

Relieved that he had returned.

Kai slowly opened his eyes.

A flicker of confusion crossed his purple eyes, not bewilderment, but the unease of waking from darkness and seeing the light again.

He looked down at his hands, clenched his fists, and felt the spiritual energy flowing within him.

The energy was rich and pure, even stronger than before his physical body was destroyed.

"Guiyuanzi," his voice was hoarse, but every word was clear, "I'm back."

Guiyuanzi knelt on the ground with a thud, his forehead hitting the earth heavily, sobbing uncontrollably. "Young Master... Young Master... This subordinate... This subordinate..."

He couldn't continue. A thousand words stuck in his throat, turning into sobs.

Kai emerged from the jade pool, soaked to the bone, purple spiritual light swirling around him, evaporating the water into a thin white mist.

He walked to Guiyuanzi, bent down, and helped him up.

“Guiyuanzi, you’ve worked so hard. Without you these past few days, I might have died in the wasteland long ago. I will remember your kindness.”

Guiyuanzi shook his head, wiping away his tears forcefully. “Young Master, you flatter me. I did all this not just for you, but for the Daoist sect, for our patriarch, for the Guiyuan Sect. As long as you recover, I will sacrifice myself.”

Kai patted his shoulder, saying nothing more.

Some kindnesses don’t need to be spoken; they are enough to be remembered.

He turned to look at Qingqiu.

His reflection was in Qingqiu’s amber eyes.

“Your Majesty, thank you. Without you, I wouldn’t have obtained the Chaos Elixir, nor could I have reconstructed my physical body.”

Qingqiu shook his head, a slight smile playing on his lips. “No need to thank me. You are the one chosen by Bai Qian, so it is only right that I help you.”

She paused, then added, “Moreover, I haven’t come away empty-handed. Your new body has protective runes from the Daoist sect, the power of the Great Luo Golden Scripture. I have lived for tens of thousands of years, and this is the first time I have ever seen such a thing.”

Kai looked down at the golden patterns on his body and remained silent for a moment.

He closed his eyes and focused his inner energy on his dantian.

Purple chaotic energy slowly rotated within his dantian, forming a miniature galaxy.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture floated above his dantian, illuminating the entire area and echoing the golden patterns on his new body.

He could feel that his physical body was several times stronger than before it was destroyed. The

chaotic energy was more condensed, his meridians were wider, and the protection of the Great Luo Golden Scripture was more solid.

However, when Kai circulated the Mind Concentration Technique, he suddenly frowned.

“Guiyuanzi, my cultivation… why is it only at the first level of the True Immortal Realm?”

Kai realized that although his physical body was stronger, his cultivation level had dropped considerably.

Gui Yuanzi was taken aback and quickly stepped forward to investigate.

He placed his palm on Kai’s dantian, channeling his spiritual power to probe within, carefully sensing the spiritual energy reserves within Kai’s body.

After a moment, his face turned deathly pale, and his body trembled slightly.

“Young Master’s cultivation… is indeed only at the first level of the True Immortal Realm. Although the spiritual energy in his dantian is pure, its quantity is extremely small, less than one-tenth of what it was before. This… how is this possible?”

Qingqiu frowned, quickly stepping forward to also examine Kai's cultivation.

After a moment, she lowered her hand, her expression grave. "This shouldn't be. The Eternal Soul Wood and the Chaos Spiritual Liquid are both supreme treasures of the heavens; the reconstructed body should be stronger than before. How could his cultivation have regressed?"

Kai closed his eyes, introspectively examining his dantian.

Purple chaotic power slowly rotated within his dantian, forming a faint vortex.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture floated above his dantian, illuminating the entire area.

He carefully sensed the changes within his body. After a long while, he opened his eyes, gave a bitter smile, and his eyes were filled with helplessness.

"I understand. During the process of reshaping my physical body, the Great Luo Golden Scripture consumed a large amount of chaotic power to protect my soul. That consumed chaotic power was originally used to improve my cultivation. Now that it's gone, my cultivation can only remain at the first level of the True Immortal Realm."

His voice was calm, but Gui Yuanzi heard the unwillingness beneath that calm.

"Then what should we do?" Gui Yuanzi's voice trembled, and his eyes were red. "Young Master, you finally reshaped your physical body. Are you going to be trapped at the first level of the True Immortal Realm forever?"

Gui Yuanzi stood there like a helpless child, trembling all over.

He had waited for this day for so long, paid so much, and was this how it was going to end?

Qingqiu remained silent for a long time.

She walked to the window and looked at the sky outside. Three blazing suns were slowly sinking below the horizon, dyeing the entire sky golden red.

She turned around and looked at Kai, a complex emotion flashing in her amber eyes.

“Perhaps… there’s another way.”

Gui Yuanzi’s eyes lit up instantly, and he almost jumped up. “Your Majesty, what way? Please tell me!” Qingqiu didn’t look at Guiyuanzi; she kept her eyes on Kai.

Her voice was soft, yet every word was crystal clear: “I’ve read in ancient texts that after the physical body is reconstructed, one needs to fuse bloodlines through dual cultivation to truly stabilize one’s cultivation. If the bloodline of the dual cultivation partner is strong enough, it can even help the reconstructed individual return to their peak.”

She paused, then continued, “Dual cultivation is not only about the union of the physical body, but also the fusion of bloodlines. A powerful bloodline can awaken the latent power within the reconstructed body and repair the origin consumed by the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

Kai possesses the bloodline of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox, which is of the same origin as mine. If I cultivate with you, the fusion of our bloodlines might awaken the dormant chaotic power within you and help you restore your cultivation.”

Guiyuanzi was stunned. He opened his mouth, as if to say something, but then closed it again.

He knew Qingqiu was right; there were indeed such records in the ancient texts.

Moreover, Kai did indeed possess the bloodline of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox, which Bai Qian had left for him.

“Guiyuanzi, you may leave now,” Qingqiu’s voice was calm, without a trace of emotion.

Gui Yuanzi hesitated for a moment, then bowed deeply to Kai and Qing Qiu before leaving the side hall and gently closing the door.

Only Kai and Qing Qiu remained in the side hall.

Qing Qiu walked to the warm jade bed, slowly removing her white dress to reveal her fair, jade-like skin.

Her figure was exquisite, with graceful curves, every inch exuding the charm of a mature woman.

Her long, ink-black hair hung down her back, the ends slightly curled, resembling a fox’s tail.

Kai walked up to her, looking at her.

“Your Majesty, this is not allowed…” Kai shook his head.

“Not allowed?” Qing Qiu smiled, a faint smile, yet carrying a reassuring gentleness.

“You say it’s not allowed, but your body is quite honest, isn’t it?”

Upon hearing this, Kai quickly lowered his head, realizing that his body had undergone a change.

He was a normal man; how could he not react when such a beautiful woman undressed before him?

“Your Majesty, I’ve already cultivated with your offspring; now, with you, wouldn’t that be…” Kai hesitated.

“I’ve lived for tens of thousands of years, what haven’t I seen? What haven’t I experienced? You carry the blood of my clan within you; helping you is helping myself.”

“Besides, this is the Heavenly Realm, not the mortal world bound by ethical constraints. And Bai Qian is merely a descendant of my bloodline, not my own child. What is there to fear?”

She reached out and gently placed her hand on Kai’s chest.

A white spiritual light surged from her palm, containing the primordial power of the Nine-Tailed Celestial Fox, gentle yet powerful, like the warm sun in spring.

Kai felt a warm power flow into his body, intertwining with the chaotic power within him, slowly flowing through his meridians, repairing the damage caused during the reconstruction of his physical body.

He closed his eyes, pulled Qingqiu into his embrace, and then thrust himself into her fiercely, showing no mercy.

The two embraced tightly, their bloodlines merging.

The white spiritual light and the purple chaotic spiritual light intertwined, forming a giant cocoon of light in the side hall.

The cocoon completely enveloped them, isolating them from everything outside.

Within the cocoon of light, Kai’s cultivation began to slowly ascend.

True Immortal Realm, First Grade, Mid-Stage

, Late Stage, Peak. True Immortal Realm, Second Grade, Second Grade

, Mid-Stage, Late Stage, Peak. True Immortal Realm

, Third Grade, Third Grade, Mid-Stage, Late Stage, Peak.

True Immortal Realm, Fourth Grade, Fourth Grade, Mid-Stage, Late Stage, Peak. True Immortal Realm, Fifth Grade,

Fifth Grade, Mid-Stage, Late Stage, Peak. Only upon reaching the Sixth Grade of True Immortal Realm did the ascending power gradually subside.

Within Kai's dantian, the vortex of chaotic power became even more solid than before, the purple light reaching its peak, like a miniature galaxy slowly rotating.

The golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture also became brighter, perfectly merging with the chaotic power, indistinguishable from it.

The cocoon of light dissipated, and Kai opened his eyes, his purple eyes now warmer and less cold.

His cultivation remained steadily at the Sixth Grade of True Immortal Realm, several minor realms higher than before his physical body was destroyed.

The chaotic power within his body was more condensed than before, his meridians wider, and the golden light of the Great Luo Golden Scripture brighter.

Qingqiu lay beside him, her face somewhat pale, but a satisfied smile played on her lips.

"It seems my bloodline is quite effective. Thirty-eight thousand years of cultivation has finally paid off."

Kai turned to look at her, his eyes filled with gratitude. "Your Majesty, thank you. Without you, I don't know how long it would have taken to recover."

Qingqiu shook her head, extending a finger to gently touch Kai's lips. "No need to thank me. You are the one chosen by Bai Qian, it's only right that I help you. Besides..."

She paused, a sly smile flashing in her eyes, like a girl who had stolen honey.

“I didn’t lose out either. Cultivating with a mere sixth-grade True Immortal has purified my bloodline considerably, and I’ve even tasted the pleasures of being a woman. This deal is a win-win no matter how you look at it.”

Kai smiled.

He stood up and put on his robes.

The door to the side hall was pushed open, and Gui Yuanzi strode in.

The first thing he saw was the spiritual light surrounding Kai, an aura many times stronger than before.

“Young Master, your cultivation…”

“Sixth Rank True Immortal.” Kai’s voice was calm, but every word exuded confidence. “Several minor realms higher than before. The power of the Great Luo Golden Scripture has also recovered most of its strength.”

Gui Yuanzi knelt on the ground with a thud, tears streaming down his face.

This time, he didn’t hold back, letting the tears flow freely, soaking his clothes. “Heaven has eyes! Heaven has eyes! Ancestral Master, please bless us, Young Master has finally recovered!” The purple aura surrounding Kai slowly receded like a tide, each ray of light carrying an indescribable rhythm, as if the laws of heaven and earth were being rewoven within his body.

The golden runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture gradually dimmed from the surface of his skin, but did not disappear; instead, they merged into the depths of his flesh and blood, becoming one with his meridians, bones, and internal organs.

That gold was no longer an external radiance, but had transformed into a part of the very essence of life—pale golden patterns appeared on the surface of his bones, like the inscriptions and imprints of ancient gods.

His cultivation level remained steadily at the sixth rank of the True Immortal Realm.

This was no ordinary sixth rank True Immortal Realm.

He clenched his fist slightly, a low, booming sound emanating from his knuckles. The sound was not loud, but it caused the air in the entire side hall to tremble.

The spiritual energy in the hall seemed to be drawn in by something, forming a visible vortex centered on him.

Chaotic power surged within his meridians, like an ancient ferocious beast lying in wait.

His physical body was several times stronger than before it was destroyed—every inch of his skin shimmered with a faint purple glow, and beneath his skin, faint golden runes flowed endlessly, a phenomenon resulting from the fusion of the Great Luo Golden Scripture and the power of chaos.

His meridians were as wide as great rivers, with spiritual energy surging within them, each breath inhaling and exhaling the immense power of heaven and earth.

The protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture appeared and disappeared on his body like golden dragons, sometimes emerging, sometimes vanishing, carrying an ancient and solemn majesty.

He stood there, not deliberately releasing his pressure, but the aura he naturally exuded made the entire side hall feel heavier.

The jade inlaid on the pillars emitted a faint hum, as if unable to bear his presence.

The spiritual patterns on the ground were suppressed by his aura, and the originally bright patterns became dim and lackluster.

Gui Yuanzi knelt on the ground, tears streaming down his face.

He trembled all over as he cried, unable to utter a complete sentence.

Now Kai had recovered, no longer a fragile soul, no longer a dim soul pearl, but a living, breathing person.

His green robe remained unchanged, his long sword at his side, his purple eyes reflecting the world as if everything was under his control.

Gui Yuanzi wanted to say something, but could only utter choked sobs.

He bowed his head, his forehead pressed against the cold jade brick, tears soaking the stone. He had waited too long for this day.

Qing Qiu stood to the side, her white robes as white as snow. She had

put her plain white palace dress back on, her long, ink-black hair cascading down her back.

Her face was still somewhat pale; Kai had been too fierce, almost overwhelming her.

But a smile played on her lips, a faint smile, yet one that radiated a deep, heartfelt joy.

She had lived for tens of thousands of years.

In those tens of thousands of years, she had witnessed countless geniuses rise to power.

Some were born emperors, some defied fate, and some achieved enlightenment and ascended to the upper realms in a single moment.

She had witnessed the birth of Golden Immortals, the fall of Great Luo Immortals, and the collapse and rebirth of heaven and earth.

But she had never seen anyone like Kai before.

It wasn't because he had the highest talent—geniuses at the Seventeenth Heaven were as numerous as carp crossing a river.

It wasn't because he had the strongest combat power—those above the third rank of Golden Immortal could easily crush him.

It was because he possessed something indescribable.

It was a Dao heart, an obsession, an unyielding stubbornness, and a fierce determination to rise again no matter how many times he was crushed.

"Worth it," she thought.

She had given her tens of thousands of years of chastity to Kai, but Qingqiu felt it was worth it; this man was worthy of her giving her body.

Kai ignored their gazes and turned to walk towards the window.

The window in the side hall was extremely large, its frame made of thousand-year-old spirit wood, carved with patterns of ten thousand demons paying homage.

Outside the window, three blazing suns hung high.

One was golden, one silver-white, and one crimson, weaving their light into a magnificent scroll, pouring down upon the mountains of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

The entire valley was bathed in a warm golden-red hue, as if coated with divine light.

His gaze swept over the palaces and pavilions within the valley, over the winding spiritual veins of the mountains, over the cultivators practicing their exercises, and finally settled on the horizon.

There, dark clouds were gathering.

Not ordinary dark clouds, but black clouds formed from the condensation of bloodlust and killing intent.

Kai's thoughts returned to the Sixteenth Heaven.

He didn't know how Jiang Xuelan was doing now.

"Guiyuanzi,"

he spoke.

His voice was soft, his tone calm, like a casual question.

"Your subordinate is here."

Guiyuanzi quickly stood up, wiping away the tears streaming down his face with his sleeve.

His knees were still trembling, whether from kneeling for too long or from excitement, it was unclear.

"I want to return to the Sixteenth Heaven."

Six words, spoken lightly, yet they resounded like six thunderclaps in the side hall.

Guiyuanzi's face instantly changed.

His previously flushed cheeks turned deathly pale, tears welling in his eyes. "Young Master, what did you say? Back to the Sixteenth Heaven?"

His voice rose involuntarily. “You’ve finally reconstructed your physical body, and your cultivation has only just recovered. How can you…”

“Precisely because you’ve recovered, you must go back,”

Kai interrupted him.

He turned around, his purple eyes looking at Gui Yuanzi.

Those eyes held no anger, no impatience, not even a ripple.

But it was this calmness that made Gui Yuanzi’s words catch in his throat.

“I have a female companion, Jiang Xuelan, still in the Sixteenth Heaven, perhaps still in the dungeon of the Divine Alliance.”

Kai’s voice paused, and when he uttered those three words, there was a subtle fluctuation that was difficult for others to detect. “How long has she been imprisoned? How much torture has she endured? Every day she waits for me. I can’t let her wait too long.”

Gui Yuanzi’s lips trembled.

He wanted to refute, to say, “You can go, but wait until you’re stronger,” to say, “We’ll bring more men,” to say, “The Seventeenth Heaven needs you more.”

But he said nothing.

Qing Qiu’s brows furrowed slightly.

Having lived for tens of thousands of years and witnessed too much life and death, she had long since developed a heart of stone.

But she still spoke: ” Kai, I know you are anxious.”

Her voice was soft yet clear, carrying the elegance unique to the Fox Queen, “But your current cultivation is only at the sixth rank of the True Immortal Realm. Although the Sixteenth Heaven is called the lower realm, it still possesses the foundation of a Golden Immortal. If you go alone, what if something goes wrong…”

“Your Majesty.”

Kai turned around, facing Qingqiu directly.

His gaze was frank and open, even carrying a faint smile.

“I am not alone.”

Qingqiu was taken aback.

Kai raised his right hand, palm open.

A wisp of purple chaotic fire danced in his palm. The flame was quiet, without a violent burning sound or blazing light.

It simply sat there, slowly dancing, yet it caused the temperature in the side hall to rise sharply.

The air distorted around the flame, and fine cracks appeared on the jade pillars, traces of the spatial structure being scorched.

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“I possess the Great Luo Golden Scripture.”

The flames shifted from purple to gold, golden runes emerging from beneath his skin, forming a pale golden shield around him.

Dragon patterns faintly flowed across the shield, radiating an ancient and majestic aura.

“I possess the power of chaos.”

The golden runes were once again engulfed by the purple flames, the two powers merging within him to form a third color—a deep, almost black, purple.

“I possess the cultivation of a sixth-grade True Immortal.”

He spoke this with a calm tone, as if stating an undeniable fact. “In the Sixteenth Heaven, those so-called peak ninth-grade True Immortals are nothing more than larger ants before me. Whether it’s Venerable Han Yuan or Wei Pengkun, killing them requires no second sword strike.”

His voice wasn’t loud, but every word resonated deeply.

It wasn’t boasting, arrogance, or bravado; it was the confidence forged through countless life-or-death battles, the understanding gained after traversing mountains of corpses and seas of blood.

This understanding was ingrained, becoming part of his instincts, so when he spoke it, it was as natural as saying “the sun rises in the east.”

Qingqiu remained silent.

She knew Kai was telling the truth.

The power of chaos restrained all other powers—immortal power, demonic power, monster power, holy light—no power could gain an advantage before chaos.

The physical body cultivated by the Great Luo Golden Scripture was indestructible, and combined with his cultivation at the sixth rank of True Immortal Realm, Kai truly had no rivals in the Sixteenth Heaven.

Those so-called peak ninth-rank True Immortal Realm cultivators were like paper before the power of chaos, shattering with a single blow.

More importantly, she knew she couldn’t stop him.

Once such a person made up his mind, not even the collapse of the sky could stop him.

“Young Master, but the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge needs you.”

Gui Yuanzi was still unwilling, his voice almost pleading, “The army of the Heavenly Supreme Venerable will be at the city gates in at most half a month. If you are not here, the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge will be leaderless…”

Kai interrupted him.

“Gui Yuanzi.”

He walked up to Gui Yuanzi and patted his shoulder.

His hand was steady, and the warmth from his palm gradually calmed Gui Yuanzi’s trembling. “The Heavenly Venerable’s army will need another half month to assemble. I’ll return to the Sixteenth Heaven, a round trip of seven days at most. I will return within seven days.”

He paused, his gaze sweeping over Gui Yuanzi’s bloodshot eyes. “Tell me, can Wan Yao Ridge hold out in seven days?”

Gui Yuanzi opened his mouth, then closed it again.

Seven days, Wan Yao Ridge could certainly hold out.

Qing Qiu was here, along with the sect leader of the Qingyun Sword Sect, the deputy sect leader of the Wanfa Sect, and their Gui Yuan Sect. These people could easily resist for a few days.

Seven days?

More than enough.

“Seven days,”

Qing Qiu spoke.

She slowly walked to Kai's side, her white robes fluttering in the air, her long hair cascading down like a waterfall.

Her face was still somewhat pale, but her fox-like eyes had regained their former sharpness. "I can give you seven days. Within seven days, whether you rescue that woman or not, you must return."

She paused, her voice now carrying an undeniable air of authority. "The Heavenly Venerable will not give you any more time. If he attacks prematurely, although Ten Thousand Demon Ridge can be defended, the cost will be significant."

Kai nodded. "Seven days is enough."

He didn't say "thank you," didn't say "I will definitely return," didn't say anything superfluous.

He simply nodded slightly to Qingqiu, then turned and walked out of the hall.

Gui Yuanzi took two steps after him, then stopped.

He knew that once the young master made a decision, no one could stop him.

The only thing he could do was kneel down and kowtow three times to Kai's retreating figure.

The young man's silhouette stretched long at the hall's entrance, the rays of the three blazing suns bathing him in a pale gold light, turning his azure robe a pale gold. The

Dragon-Slaying Sword at his waist trembled slightly, a wisp of purple light flowing across its blade.

The figure stood tall and straight like a pine tree, his steps steady as a mountain, walking step by step towards the secret realm.

Qingqiu watched his back, silent for a long time.

No one knew what she was thinking at that moment.

Perhaps she was thinking of her own spirited self from years ago, perhaps she was worried about her daughter's future, or perhaps she was simply touched by something about this young man.

"Let's go," she said softly, turning and walking towards the back mountain. "The opening of the void passage will take time."

The back mountain of the Demon Emperor's Palace.

This was a forbidden area, not even allowed for demon elders to enter without permission.

A hundred-foot-wide open space was paved with black jade.

These jade stones were not ordinary stones; they came from the deepest veins of the Seventeenth Heaven, each piece containing fragments of spatial laws.

The surface of the jade stones was covered with densely packed runes, the patterns ancient and complex, some like twisted snakes, some like birds with outstretched wings, some like the sun, moon, and stars.

A faint silver light flowed between the runes, the purest spatial power.

In the center of the open space, a three-foot-high stone platform stood silently. The stone

platform, made of an unknown material, was entirely black yet emitted a faint luster.

Engraved on it was an even more complex magic array: forty-nine ring-shaped runes, nested layer upon layer, each rune composed of thousands of tiny spiritual patterns.

This was an interdimensional teleportation array left behind by a powerful being from the ancient Wan Yao Ridge, said to be a masterpiece completed over a century by the Demon Emperor, who gathered seventy-two grandmasters of array formations from the demon race to facilitate communication with other realms .

Qingqiu stood before the stone platform, taking a deep breath.

She slowly raised her hands, interlacing her fingers to form an ancient hand seal.

White spiritual light surged from her palms, pure and without a trace of impurity. The light flowed like water, slowly pouring into the magic array on the stone platform. Her spiritual power poured out without restraint, so quickly that her face paled several breaths. She knew very well how much this level of interdimensional array consumed her, but she did not hesitate. Because Kai did not hesitate. The first rune lit up, its silver light spilling like mercury. Then came the second, the third, the fourth—forty-nine ring-shaped runes lit up in a mysterious order, each light accompanied by a deep hum. The sound wasn't like a musical instrument, but rather like the resonance of the laws of heaven and earth, like space itself chanting. The silver light grew brighter and brighter.

When the last rune was lit, the entire back mountain was illuminated as if it were daytime.

The light on the stone platform was so bright that it was impossible to look directly at it, but Qingqiu's eyes did not blink, and the hand seals on her hands kept changing.

She was manipulating the runes, guiding them to operate on the correct path.

Space began to distort.

The air in the center of the magic circle was first compressed, and then suddenly expanded outwards, forming a pitch-black vortex.

The vortex was only three feet in diameter, but it gave people a feeling of unfathomable depth. Starlight flickered faintly within the vortex.

These weren't stars in the sky, but rather gaps between different spatial planes, entrances to the endless void.

An ancient and desolate aura surged from the vortex—the aura of the void itself, an existence more ancient than any world.

"The void passage has opened."

Qingqiu slowly withdrew her hands, her voice paler than before, fine beads of sweat forming on her forehead. "It can only last thirty breaths. Any more, and I won't be able to hold on."

She paused, then added, "The exit of the passage is in the Northern Wilderness of the Sixteenth Heaven, about a thousand miles from the Divine Alliance's main hall. This distance won't alert their restrictions, nor will it allow you to travel too far."

She took out a silver-white token from her robes and handed it to Kai. "Use this token when you return."

The token was about the size of a palm, its material resembling jade but not quite, and it felt cool to the touch.

The front of the token was engraved with a nine-tailed fox, and the back with an intricate rune.

When Kai received the token, he could clearly sense the spatial power it contained. It was Qingqiu who had injected it to create a kind of spatial connection between them.

“Infuse your spiritual power into the token, and I will sense it in the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge and open the passage for you again. But remember…”

Qingqiu looked at him, her voice suddenly becoming serious, “The passage can only be opened once. The power contained in this token is only enough to support one interdimensional teleportation. If you encounter danger in the Sixteenth Heaven, use it to return. But if you are safe, stay there and continue your battle. Understand?”

Kai carefully put the token away, storing it in the deepest part of his storage ring. “Thank you, Your Majesty.”

Qingqiu shook her head.

She remained silent for a long time. The wind blew through her long hair, and the white strands fluttered in the void.

She seemed to want to say something, but in the end, she just looked into Kai’s eyes and said, word by word, “Come back alive. I cannot live without you.”

She paused, “I have just tasted the pleasures of being a woman, and I don’t want to taste them only once.”

Kai knew very well the weight of these words coming from the mouth of a fox queen.

He didn’t say much, only nodded solemnly, “I will. After I return, I will let you taste the pleasures of being a woman every day.”

Then he turned and walked towards the void passage. His

cyan robe fluttered in the wind.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword at his waist emitted a deep hum, the purple light on its blade growing brighter and brighter.

His steps were not fast, but each step was firm, like a king marching to the battlefield.

Gui Yuanzi stood at the edge of the passage, his eyes red with anxiety.

He took two steps forward, then stopped, then took two more steps forward, then stopped again, “Young Master! Are you really going? I’ll go with you!”

His voice was almost a roar.

“No.” Kai didn’t turn his head, his voice as calm as an ancient well, “Ten Thousand Demon Ridge needs you. You stay here and help His Majesty guard this place. This is an order.”

Gui Yuanzi’s steps suddenly stopped.

An order.

The young master said this was an order.

He stood there, as if nailed to the spot.

He watched Kai’s figure recede into the distance, watched the figure reach the edge of the void passage, watched Kai raise his right foot and step into the dark vortex.

The void passage suddenly contracted, and the vortex, as if coming to life, swallowed Kai’s figure whole.

Purple light intertwined with the dark void, then gradually faded.

The silver runes extinguished one after another, from the last to the first, in perfect order.

After all forty-nine ring runes had dimmed, the stone platform returned to its original state, as if nothing had happened.

Only Qingqiu and Guiyuanzi remained on the empty ground.

Guiyuanzi knelt on the ground and kowtowed three times in the direction where the void passage had disappeared.

His forehead struck the jade ground with a thud, “Young Master, you must come back alive…”

His voice choked, and tears welled up again.

Qingqiu stood behind him, gazing at the empty sky, silent for a long, long time.

The three blazing suns still hung high, casting golden light on her white robes.

But she felt no warmth.

“He will return,” Qingqiu whispered, as if speaking to Guiyuanzi, yet also to herself. “This kind of person has a tough life.”

…

The Sixteenth Heaven, the Northern Wasteland.

The sky was bluish-gray, like a rusty iron plate, heavily pressing down on the earth.

Two moons hung high, one silvery-white like frost, the other dark red like blood. The light of the two moons intertwined, dyeing the earth an eerie silver-red, like a pool of congealed blood. A

faint smell of decay permeated the air, the traces of tens of thousands of years of war, slaughter, and enslavement, long since seeped into every inch of soil and every wisp of wind in this land.

The wasteland was deathly silent.

Apart from the sound of the wind, there was nothing.

The spirit beasts that once inhabited this place had long since vanished, and the spirit herbs that once grew here had long since withered.

The Divine Alliance had ruled the Sixteenth Heaven for so many years, squeezing this land clean, leaving only desolation and ruin.

Suddenly, the space above the wasteland abruptly tore apart.

It didn't open slowly, nor did it crack quietly; rather, it was blasted open from within by a domineering force.

A pitch-black fissure appeared out of thin air, like a wound cleaved by an invisible giant sword, stretching for tens of feet.

Purple flames burned along the edges of the fissure, leaping in the void and distorting the very space. Then, a beam of purple light shot out from the fissure.

The light wasn't dazzling, but it carried a suffocating sense of oppression.

The moment it burst forth from the fissure, the wasteland within a hundred miles trembled.

The rubble on the ground bounced up, the air emitted a sharp buzzing sound, and the two moons in the sky seemed to dim slightly.

The light landed on a low hill in the wasteland and slowly dissipated.

A figure stood steadily atop the hill. He wore

a long blue robe, a long sword at his waist.

His figure was as upright as a pine tree, his shoulders as steady as mountains.

The wind blew his robes, making a rustling sound, but he remained motionless, like a stone statue that had stood there since ancient times.

He raised his head, revealing his cold and stern face, with features as sharp as if carved by a knife and axe, and distinct angles.

Most striking were his eyes, not the usual black or brown, but a pair of purple pupils, deep as a bottomless abyss, within which chaotic energy flowed.

A faint purple aura surrounded him, its light understated yet terrifying to behold.

It wasn't a deliberately released pressure, but a natural aura—the aftershocks

of chaotic power flowing within him .

These mere aftershocks exerted immense pressure on the surrounding wasteland, stretching for hundreds of feet.

Fine cracks appeared in the ground, as if it had been crushed by some invisible force. All impurities in the air were expelled, forming a pure spatial realm.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword hung at his waist, the ancient patterns on its scabbard gleaming coldly in the moonlight.

The sword trembled slightly, emitting a low hum—the sword spirit was excited, sensing its master's change, sensing the power several times greater than before.

Kai closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

The spiritual energy of the Sixteenth Heaven surged into his meridians.

Thin, indeed thin, more than ten times weaker than the Seventeenth Heaven.

Fragments of laws were pitifully few, almost negligible.

But he knew this air, this aura, every inch of this land intimately.

Free Valley.

The Divine Alliance.

Black Rock Prison.

Crimson Flame Prison.

Northern Underworld Prison.

Every inch of this land bore his footprints.

Every city held his enemies.

Every battle was stained with his blood.

He had been hunted, wanted, and besieged here.

His comrades had died here, his body shattered here.

Now, he had returned.

He slowly opened his eyes. In his purple pupils, there was no anger, no killing intent, only absolute calm.

That calm was more chilling than any violent killing intent, for it meant that everyone who stood in his way had already been sentenced to death in his heart.

The power of chaos circulated within him, an invisible wave spreading outwards from him.

His divine sense spread like a tide, covering a radius of a thousand miles.

Every stone, every inch of land, every wisp of wind in the Northern Region of the Sixteenth Heaven was within his perception.

He sensed many auras.

Some were dense, like the direction of the Divine Alliance's main hall, where holy light converged into a golden ocean, its nauseating sacred aura permeating hundreds of miles.

Others were faint, scattered throughout the wasteland, hidden in deep mountains, concealed in caves—the remnants of the lost soldiers of Freedom Valley, the survivors of the Spirit Race, those cultivators suppressed by the Divine Race yet still holding onto hope.

His divine sense swept across the Divine Alliance's main hall, penetrating layers of restrictions, reaching its very depths.

Then he sensed that aura.

Very faint. So faint it was almost extinguished, like a candle flickering in the wind.

That aura contained too many things: pain, exhaustion, despair, but the core remained—that indomitable spirit, that person's will, still waiting.

Jiang Xuelan.

She was still alive.

Kai withdrew his divine sense, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

The next moment, he leaped into the air.

No gathering of power, no hand seals, no use of any techniques.

He simply touched the ground with his toes, and his entire body transformed into a purple streak of light, piercing the sky.

The speed was extreme, leaving only a faint purple afterimage on the wasteland.

The afterimage vanished in less than a breath, and he himself had disappeared into the horizon, flying towards the direction of the Divine Alliance's main hall.

The speed was so fast it tore through the air.

A sharp sonic boom exploded in the air, like countless thunderclaps simultaneously roaring.

His flight path forcefully cleaved through the clouds, creating a straight passage filled with lingering purple chaotic energy.

On the ground, several rogue cultivators hidden in the valley were secretly cultivating.

They heard the earth-shattering sonic boom and looked up, only to see a purple streak of light flash across the sky, moving so fast they could only see a faint purple ray.

"What…what was that?" a young cultivator asked in a trembling voice.

The older cultivator squinted for a long time, his expression suddenly changing.

His lips trembled, and after a long pause, he uttered two words.

"Chen…Ping."

…

The Great Hall of the Divine Alliance.

Brightly lit and bustling with activity.

The entire hall covered thousands of feet, constructed entirely of white spirit jade, with countless pearls inlaid on the roof, illuminating the hall as if it were daytime.

The pillars inside were carved with the achievements of the Divine Race, vividly depicting their suppression of all races, their rule over the sixteen heavens, and their spread of the Holy Light.

Every mural spoke of the power and majesty of the Divine Alliance.

The hall's protective barrier remained open 24/7, nine layers of golden light enveloping the entire space. Countless runes flickered on the barrier, radiating powerful defensive energy.

The plaza was densely packed with Divine cultivators, numbering three thousand, all clad in armor and wielding weapons. Holy light swirled around them, turning the entire hall into a golden sea.

Wei Pengkun sat on a golden throne.

The throne, three zhang high, was cast from pure gold, its back inlaid with nine fist-sized stones of light.

From the throne, the entire hall was laid out before him. He was the leader of the Divine Alliance, the helmsman of the strongest force in the Sixteenth Heaven, commanding hundreds of thousands of cultivators and countless powerful warriors.

Here, he was the supreme king.

But at this moment, his thin fingers were tapping rhythmically on the armrests, producing a monotonous, dull thud.

The voice echoed through the hall, causing all the standing cultivators to feel an inexplicable sense of oppression.

Wei Pengkun's expression was uncertain.

His brows were furrowed, his eyes were puffy, and his eyes were bloodshot. He hadn't slept for many days.

The two Supreme Elders had gone to the Seventeenth Heaven, and no news had returned for a long time.

His greatest threat, Kai, although his physical body had been destroyed by the two Supreme Elders, his soul was sealed in the Soul-Suppressing Pearl.

As long as his soul remained, he wouldn't be at ease.

"Alliance Leader."

A Divine Race cultivator strode into the hall, his footsteps echoing through the hall, carrying a hint of urgency.

The cultivator's face was pale, and he knelt on the ground, his forehead pressed against the cold floor tiles.

"A scout from the Northern Border has sent an urgent report."

His voice trembled. "A purple streak of light is flying towards the main hall at an incredible speed. When the scout saw it at Huiyan Peak, it was still 500 li away. But just as he finished writing the urgent report, the light was already within 300 li."

The main hall fell into a deathly silence.

All the standing cultivators stopped what they were doing, and all the elders raised their heads.

The golden holy light continued to flicker, but for some reason, the hall suddenly felt cold.

Wei Pengkun's fingers, which were tapping the armrest, abruptly stopped.

His index finger hovered in mid-air, trembling slightly.

“Suspected of what?” His voice was cold, so cold it didn’t sound like it came from a living person.

“Suspected of…” The cultivator swallowed hard, his Adam’s apple bobbing three times, “Suspected of Kai.”

Kai.

These two words were like an ice knife, piercing everyone’s hearts.

Wei Pengkun’s face instantly turned deathly pale.

Fine beads of sweat appeared on his forehead, sliding down his cheeks and dripping onto the golden throne. Kai?

Impossible.

Kai’s physical body had been shattered by the combined efforts of the two Supreme Elders, and his soul was sealed within the Soul-Suppressing Pearl, taken to the Seventeenth Heaven.

How could he possibly return to the Sixteenth Heaven with his physical body intact?

But if that wasn’t Kai, then who was it?

In the Sixteenth Heaven, who would dare to brazenly fly towards the Divine Clan Alliance Hall?

Especially with that purple light— Kai’s signature color.

Wei Pengkun abruptly stood up, his golden robes billowing without wind. “Pass down the order! All troops on alert! Activate all restrictions! Immediately activate the ultimate form of the Mountain-Protecting Array!”

He practically roared the command. “No matter who comes, anyone who trespasses into the Divine Clan Alliance Hall will be killed without mercy!”

“Yes!”

A long horn sounded in the hall, the voice deep and urgent, carrying a sense of oppression that made all the Divine Clan cultivators uneasy.

The order spread throughout the hall at top speed.

On the plaza, three thousand elite members of the Divine Race swiftly formed ranks, golden holy light emanating from each cultivator, illuminating the entire plaza in a dazzling glow.

Layer upon layer of restrictions were activated—not nine, but twelve.

This was the ultimate defensive form of the Divine Race Alliance’s main hall; twelve layers of holy light shields, each composed of hundreds of runes, were enough to withstand a full-force attack from a first-grade Golden Immortal.

The shields grew thicker and thicker, the golden light intensified, and the runes flashed wildly, enveloping the entire hall completely, making it impenetrable.

These twelve layers of restrictions were the foundation accumulated by the Divine Race Alliance over tens of thousands of years, never fully activated since the hall’s founding, because it had never encountered an enemy requiring their complete activation.

But today was different.

Because Kai had arrived.

Wei Pengkun stood before the throne, staring at the sky outside the hall, his heart pounding as if it would burst from his chest, but he suppressed his fear, not letting anyone see it.

He was the leader of the Divine Race Alliance, the ruler of the Sixteenth Heaven; he could not panic.

The atmosphere within the hall grew increasingly oppressive. An elder couldn't help but speak up: "Alliance Leader, perhaps it's just a prank by some rogue cultivator, perhaps the scouts were mistaken. Kai's physical body has already been..."

"Shut up,"

Wei Pengkun interrupted him.

His voice was as cold as ice.

Because the purple light had already appeared at the edge of the sky.

It wasn't a beam of light, it was a shooting star, a shooting star that was swooping down.

It trailed a long purple tail, shattering all the clouds along its path.

The tail was hundreds of feet long, leaving a straight purple trail in the sky that lingered for a long time.

The speed was unimaginable; one moment it was a hundred miles away, the next it was within ten miles.

The entire Divine Clan Alliance Hall trembled.

It wasn't an earthquake, but the oppressive feeling brought by that light was too strong.

The twelve layers of restrictions simultaneously emitted a piercing buzz, and the runes on the light shield flickered wildly, as if sensing some kind of destructive threat.

The Divine Clan cultivators on the square began to tremble involuntarily, their weapons clanging in their hands.

They were well-trained, but in the face of this oppressive feeling, thousands of years of training became a joke.

The purple light landed precisely on the plaza directly in front of the main hall.

As the light faded, a figure appeared within the encirclement of three thousand elite divine warriors. He

wore a pristine blue robe, spotless and immaculate. A long sword hung at his waist, its scabbard ancient, the blade shimmering with a faint purple light.

He stood on the jade pavement of the plaza, his figure tall and imposing, like a mountain. His face

was cold and stern, possessing a composure beyond that of ordinary people. Most striking were his eyes. A pair of purple eyes. That purple was not ordinary purple; it was the color of chaos, the color of the beginning of heaven and earth. Purple light flowed within his pupils, like two bottomless purple abysses. No one could read anything from those eyes—no anger, no killing intent, not even emotion. Only an absolute, despairing calm. A semi-transparent purple aura surrounded him. That aura was serene, so serene it was almost inanimate. Yet, it was this very stillness that caused the twelve layers of protective barriers to tremble. The golden aura shattered before his aura, as fragile as paper. His cultivation was at the sixth rank of the True Immortal Realm. In the Divine Alliance's main hall, where True Immortals were commonplace, this might not seem particularly high. Yet, none of the three thousand elite Divine Race warriors dared to step forward. They sensed something—a fear emanating from the depths of their souls, the instinctive reaction of a rabbit encountering a tiger, the despair of prey seeing its hunter. That sixth-rank True Immortal Realm cultivation, for some reason, was far more terrifying than any ninth-rank peak True Immortal they had ever seen. Kai. It really was Kai. Wei Pengkun stood in the main hall, looking through the aura at the lonely figure in the plaza, his face ashen. His lips trembled, his fingers trembled, even his heart pounded. "You…you…how could you…" His voice was hoarse, filled with disbelief, "Wasn't your physical body destroyed? Wasn't your soul

sealed? How could you possibly…” Kai didn’t answer him. He didn’t even look at Wei Pengkun. He simply raised his right hand, palm up. A wisp of purple flame danced in his palm. The flame, only the size of a fist, was incredibly bright, casting a purple glow on his face. The flame’s temperature was unbelievably high, distorting the surrounding air and creating visible ripples. The flickering of the flame was almost inaudible, yet each flicker caused the twelve layers of restrictions to tremble. The flame was unassuming; it could even be described as still. But within that stillness lay a destructive power. The Chaos Flame, capable of suppressing all power in the world. Kai raised his eyes, looking at Wei Pengkun. His gaze was calm, a calmness that sent chills down one’s spine. “Where is Jiang Xuelan?” He uttered six words.

No threat, no roar, no emotional fluctuation. His voice was as calm as asking about the weather.

But those six words almost stopped Wei Pengkun’s heart.

Because he heard the meaning hidden within that calmness—a death sentence, a greeting from the Grim Reaper.

Kai wasn’t asking where he was; he was giving him a chance to leave his last words.

Wei Pengkun clenched his teeth.

His teeth ground together, veins bulging on his forehead.

He used all his willpower to keep from collapsing.

” Kai,” he squeezed out through clenched teeth, each word trembling, but he forced himself to speak, “You think you can break into the Divine Alliance’s main hall alone? There are three thousand elites here! Twelve layers of restrictions!”

His voice grew louder, as if using volume to mask fear, “You, a sixth-grade True Immortal, even if it really is you, so what? Do you still think this is the same place as before? You…”

He didn’t finish his sentence.

Because Kai moved. No one saw how he drew his sword.

The instant the Dragon-Slaying Sword was unsheathed, a purple sword beam burst forth from its blade.

The beam wasn’t long, only about three feet, but it was extremely condensed, its purple light as dazzling as a small sun.

There were no fancy moves, no complex sword techniques, no earth-shattering phenomena, only a pure, condensed, and incredibly fast purple blade of light.

The blade swept out horizontally.

When it touched the first layer of the protective barrier, it made no sound.

The golden holy light barrier was like ice and snow encountering the scorching sun, unable to withstand even a moment’s resistance, silently melting away.

Chaotic fire danced on the blade, directly devouring the power of law contained within the golden holy light.

The second layer.

The third layer.

The fourth layer.

Each layer of the barrier shattered in the exact same way; the moment the purple blade touched the golden barrier, it collapsed silently, like a paper lantern being cut open by a knife.

The runes on the light shield flickered wildly, attempting to repair the damage, but the chaotic power had already devoured the laws themselves, making repair impossible.

Fifth layer.

Sixth layer.

Seventh layer.

The speed of the light blade didn't decrease at all; instead, the speed at which the restrictions shattered increased.

When the eighth layer of restrictions shattered, the three elders responsible for controlling the formation simultaneously coughed up blood.

Their meridians were shattered by the backlash, and their internal organs were churning.

Ninth layer, tenth layer, eleventh layer.

The light blade swept through everything in its path; the restrictions were like paper. The twelfth layer of ultimate defense couldn't even withstand three breaths before Kai.

The moment the twelfth layer of restrictions shattered, the entire hall shook violently.

The core of the formation maintaining the restrictions exploded, shattering into thousands of fragments.

The elders controlling the formation collapsed to the ground, spitting blood, and the few with the lowest cultivation levels died instantly.

The light blade continued forward.

It swept over the divine cultivators who had rushed out of the plaza.

There were no screams, no wails, no clanging of weapons.

Only a patch of golden light drifted in the air, the traces of holy light being burned by the chaotic fire.

Hundreds of elite members of the divine race, each a powerful figure at the seventh or eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm, capable of dominating a region in the Sixteenth Heaven,

couldn't even withstand a single sword strike, turning into nothingness within the purple light blade.

The light blade continued its momentum, sweeping across the massive stone pillar in front of the hall.

The pillar, as thick as seven people could encircle, was covered with reliefs depicting the achievements of the divine race, and under the purple light blade, it was silently severed in two.

The break was smooth as a mirror, without a single burr, as if cut by the very laws of heaven and earth.

Wei Pengkun's expression completely changed.

He finally understood why the two Supreme Elders hadn't returned, while Kai had.

He turned and ran. He

ran without regard for anything else.

The dignity of the alliance leader, the glory of the divine race, the demeanor of a king—all became a joke in his heart.

All he wanted now was to survive, to escape this place, to get as far away as possible.

He activated his half-step Golden Immortal level movement technique, transforming into a golden streak of light and shooting towards the depths of the main hall.

Kai didn't chase after him.

He didn't even look in the direction Wei Pengkun had fled.

He simply sheathed the Dragon-Slaying Sword and then slowly ascended the steps.

His pace was slow, even deliberate.

Each step landed steadily on the jade steps, the sound echoing in the deathly silent plaza.

Three thousand elite members of the Divine Race parted to make way for him, three zhang away. No one dared to block his path, no one dared to step forward.

The cultivators' legs trembled, their weapons clanged in their hands, their eyes filled with undisguised fear.

Kai walked among them like a king passing through a court.

No, not a king; even kings have to consider the expressions of their subjects.

He was the Grim Reaper, every step he took reaping lives.

Whether they knelt or not, whether they submitted or not, they all trembled before him.

He entered the main hall.

The divine cultivators inside the hall retreated like a receding tide.

Dozens of elders, hundreds of deacons, and hundreds of guards—not one dared to make a move.

They retreated, desperately retreated, retreating to the walls, behind the pillars, and into the corners of the hall.

Some trembled, some prayed, and some fainted from fright.

Kai's gaze swept across the hall, as calm as if he were surveying his own territory.

"Where is Jiang Xuelan?" he asked again.

A divine cultivator pointed tremblingly to the back of the hall.

His fingers trembled so much he could barely point, his voice broken: "In…in the dungeon…in the dungeon behind the hall…"

As soon as he finished speaking, he collapsed to the ground, gasping for breath.

Kai didn't look at him, walking straight through the hall towards the dungeon at the back.

He walked calmly, his back ramrod straight.

His azure robe stood out starkly against the golden light of the hall, like a purple sword slicing through a golden sea.

No one dared to follow, no one dared to utter a sound.

Only rapid breathing and the sound of teeth chattering filled the hall.

Only after Kai's figure disappeared into the depths of the hall did an elder slide down to the ground, his body drenched in cold sweat.

"He…he's back…"

That word “he” was more terrifying than the word “death.”

The dungeon of the Divine Alliance was located at the deepest part of the hall, dozens of feet underground.

The passage leading to the dungeon was a narrow staircase, no more than three feet wide, allowing only one person to pass at a time.

The walls on both sides of the passage were cast from extraterrestrial meteorite iron, three feet thick, and covered with sealing runes.

Every seven steps there was a rune; some were the holy light restrictions of the ancient divine race, others were sealing spells of the Yin-Yang School, layered upon each other, transforming the entire passage into an impenetrable cage.

There were no lights in the passage, but the runes on the walls emitted a pale golden glow.

The light was cold, bone-chillingly cold, like a chill seeping from the very marrow of one’s bones.

The air was thick with a damp, decaying stench, and a faint, almost impenetrable odor of blood.

It was the residue left by countless prisoners in the dungeon—sweat, blood, tears, and the desperate breath of their dying moments.

At the end of the passage stood a door two zhang high.

Forged from a single piece of extraterrestrial meteorite iron, its thickness was astonishing; it was impossible to push open.

The door was covered with a dense array of restrictions—not ordinary restrictions, but seven layers of superimposed seals.

Each seal represented a different law, laid down by seven elders at the ninth rank of True Immortal Realm, each layer interlocking with the others. Breaking one layer would trigger the backlash of the other six.

The seven elders took turns day and night to maintain the seals.

These seven seals required the power of a Golden Immortal to forcibly open.

In this Sixteenth Heaven, Golden Immortals were practically legendary beings, so this door had never been opened from the outside.

But now, someone had come. Kai stood before the door.

His purple eyes swept over the complex sealing runes, his gaze as calm as if he were looking at a few scraps of paper.

He didn't study the restrictions, didn't deduce a way to break them, didn't use any tricks.

He simply made a movement.

He reached out and grasped the lock.

The lock was forged from ten-thousand-year-old cold iron, with a core rune the size of a thumb engraved on its body—the control hub of the seven layers of seals.

The lock head was icy cold, gleaming with a chilling blue light in the darkness.

Chaotic fire surged from his palm.

The purple flames spread from his hand to the lock, burning through the seven layers of restrictions one by one.

There were no earth-shattering sounds, no violent fluctuations of spiritual energy, only the faint hissing sound of flames burning gold paper.

The first layer of restrictions was like thin paper in the face of the chaotic fire, instantly curling, charring, and shattering.

The second layer, the third layer—the flames climbed the patterns of the restriction runes, burning along the direction of the flowing light, disintegrating the sealing structure constructed by those laws from the inside.

The moment the fourth layer of restrictions shattered, a blinding white light erupted in the passage—the backlash from the forced breaking of the seal.

But before that power could spread, it was devoured by the chaotic fire.

The fifth and sixth layers—the flames burned ever brighter, illuminating the entire passage with purple light.

The holy runes on the walls began to melt, flowing down like candle wax.

The seventh and final layer of restrictions—a seal left by an ancient god, containing the power of laws at the Golden Immortal level.

It withstood the chaotic fire for three breaths before shattering like an eggshell.

Seven layers of restrictions, fourteen breaths, all destroyed.

Kai flicked his wrist, and the lock, forged from ten-thousand-year-old cold iron, shattered into iron dust.

The door collapsed with a deafening crash, hitting the ground with a dull thud.

Behind the door was a small, damp, cold, and utterly dark cell.

There was only one lamp in the cell, the oil nearly burned out, a tiny flame, smaller than a bean, flickering on the wick.

The dim light barely illuminated a corner of the cell.

In the corner lay a pile of moldy straw, upon which sat a figure.

She wore a long white dress, but it was tattered beyond recognition. Her

exposed arms were so thin they were almost skin and bones, her skin covered in countless scars—whip marks, burns, and scalds left by some kind of magical artifact.

Her hands were bound by a jet-black chain, extending from the wall and securing her firmly to the cold stone.

The chain was engraved with sealing runes, constantly emitting a ghostly blue light.

Each flash of that light drained a portion of her spiritual energy to maintain the seal.

Her face was as pale as paper, her lips cracked and bleeding. Her

once flowing black hair was now disheveled, obscuring half her face.

She huddled in the corner, as if trying to shrink herself to ward off the cold.

Hearing the door collapse, she slowly raised her head. Her

disheveled black hair slid down, revealing a thin, stubborn face.

Her lips trembled, her eyes brimming with tears, yet she stubbornly held them back.

Those eyes, which should have been bright and full of life, were now covered with a layer of gray despair, like ashes that had burned away all light and heat.

Then she saw the person in the doorway.

A long blue robe, a long sword at his waist, his figure as upright as ever.

His purple eyes shone brightly in the darkness; the light wasn't cold, but warm, like a purple sun, dispelling all the chill and despair in the dungeon.

A faint purple aura surrounded him, not dazzling, but illuminating all the fear in her heart.

Jiang Xuelan froze.

" Kai..."

her lips trembled, her voice almost inaudible, " Kai...is that you? Am I dreaming?"

Kai didn't speak.

He strode forward, each step firm and steady.

He crouched down and reached out to grasp the God-Locking Chain. Sensing the intrusion, the sealing runes on the chain suddenly erupted with a blinding, eerie blue light, attempting to resist.

But chaotic fire surged from Kai's palm, instantly incinerating the runes and the chain together into ashes.

The chain snapped and fell to the ground with a crisp clang.

The sound of the sealing runes shattering echoed in the cell, like some shackles finally being broken.

Jiang Xuelan's hands were free again, two deep bloody gashes on her wrists, the skin chafed raw by the chains, revealing the pink flesh beneath.

Ignoring the pain, she threw herself into Kai's arms, her thin arms tightly embracing his back, as if trying to melt into his body.

Her body trembled violently, not from the cold, but from the release of emotions that had been suppressed for so long.

"I thought you were dead... I thought you'd never come back..."

Her voice was broken, choked with sobs. "Those divine cultivators talk outside the dungeon every day, saying your physical body is destroyed, your soul is sealed, that your life is over... They talk about it every day, they laugh every day... I thought... I thought..."

She couldn't go on, she just buried her face in his chest and cried loudly.

It wasn't a soft sob, not a suppressed tear, but a heart-wrenching cry.

She cried out all her grievances, fears, and despair.

All the tears she had held back in imprisonment, all the pain she had suppressed in torture, all the bitterness she had carried alone in despair, all poured out at this moment.

She cried so hard that she was trembling, so hard that she couldn't catch her breath, so hard that her voice was hoarse.

Her tears soaked Kai's clothes, but he seemed not to notice.

Kai didn't speak.

He just held her.

One hand around her shoulder, the other gently patting her back.

The movement was light and slow, yet it carried a reassuring power.

The power of chaos formed a thin layer of light that enveloped her, warm, safe, and shielding her from the chill of the dungeon.

A very, very long time passed.

Jiang Xuelan's sobs gradually subsided, from wailing to sobbing, and from sobbing to choking.

She raised her head, looking at Kai through teary eyes.

Her eyes were red like a rabbit's, her face was streaked with tears, and her lips were still trembling slightly, but a glimmer of light had appeared in her eyes.

"Your cultivation... how come it's only at the sixth rank of True Immortal Realm?" Her voice was still weak, but there was a hint of doubt in her tone, "You weren't before..."

"It's a long story."

Kai raised his hand and gently wiped away her tears with his knuckles, "We'll talk about it when we get back. Now, I'll take you out first."

He stood up and picked Jiang Xuelan up.

Her body was very light, unbelievably light.

After being imprisoned in the dungeon for so long, her spiritual power was sealed, her physical body was weak, and even her bones felt lighter. She wrapped her arms around Kai's neck, pressing her face against his shoulder. Through the fabric of his blue robe, she could feel the warmth of his body.

Her eyes welled up again. "I thought I'd never see you again."

"I'm back."

Kai's voice was as calm as ever, but Jiang Xuelan sensed something beneath that calm.

They had fought side by side for so long; he didn't need to say more, she understood everything.

"Hold me tight."

Purple chaotic energy formed a protective shield around them.

Kai strode out of the dungeon, walked through the rune-covered passage, passed through the empty hall, and returned to the plaza.

The plaza was even more spacious than when he entered.

He had casually killed off a group of the three thousand elite Divine Race soldiers with a single sword strike, but during his time in the dungeon, Wei Pengkun had gathered even more men.

The plaza surrounding the hall was once again filled with Divine Race cultivators, densely packed, numbering in the thousands.

Their holy light merged into one, dyeing the sky gold.

Although he had shattered the twelve layers of restrictions, new temporary restrictions had been set up, layer upon layer of golden light enveloping the entire hall.

While not as strong as the previous twelve layers, it was still enough to give a True Immortal Realm Ninth Grade expert a headache.

Wei Pengkun stood at the very back of the crowd.

He had donned his golden armor again, gripping the Spirit-Slaying Holy Sword in his hand.

But his lips were white, his hands trembled, and his eyes were uneasy.

He hid behind a group of elders and guards, not daring to face the young man holding the woman.

His voice trembled, but he still tried to maintain the last shred of dignity: ” Kai, do you think you can leave here alive? This is the Divine Clan Alliance Hall, the power center of the Sixteenth Heaven!

You can kill a hundred people, a thousand people! But I can summon even more! Your True Immortal Realm Sixth Grade spiritual power is ultimately limited, do you think you can…”

Kai interrupted him.

“Three thousand?”

The corners of his mouth slightly curled up, revealing a very faint arc.

It wasn’t a smile, but a condescending indifference.

His voice was calm, so calm that it sent chills down the spines of everyone who heard it.

“Not enough.”

The words had barely left his lips when he drew his sword.

This time, everyone saw clearly how he drew it.

Because he deliberately made them see it.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword slowly emerged from its sheath, the purple light on its blade gradually intensifying, spreading from the hilt to the tip.

The purple light wasn’t blinding, yet it made everyone squint.

Chaotic power condensed, compressed, and condensed again on the sword, finally transforming into a hundred-foot-long purple sword beam.

That sword beam spanned the heavens and earth, hanging high above the plaza, like a purple divine punishment hanging over everyone's heads.

The first strike landed.

The purple sword beam swept across the plaza, melting away the golden holy light like ice and snow wherever it passed.

The armor, weapons, and flesh of hundreds of divine cultivators shattered.

There were no screams, no wails; everything happened in silence.

The chaotic fire devoured everything, turning holy light, spiritual power, divine souls, physical bodies, armor, and weapons into nothingness.

Hundreds of people were killed with a single sword strike, leaving nothing behind but a scattering of golden light in the air, like a silent golden snowfall.

The second sword strike descended.

Another hundred-foot-long sword beam swept across.

This time, even before the sword beam landed, the sheer sharpness of the sword energy caused hundreds to lose their footing.

The lower-level Divine Race cultivators were directly blasted away by the sword energy, tumbling and crashing into their companions in the air.

The sword beam followed closely, slicing them, along with their weapons, their formations, and their restrictions, into fragments.

Hundreds more died.

The third sword strike descended.

The last batch of Divine Race cultivators finally collapsed.

They were not the lowest-ranking soldiers of the Divine Race; each one was a carefully selected elite, each one had experienced countless battles.

But at this moment, their will was utterly destroyed.

Some began to flee, some knelt down to surrender, and some collapsed to the ground trembling.

But the purple sword beam did not stop; it swept across, devouring everything in its path.

In less than ten breaths,

three thousand elite soldiers were completely annihilated.

Only one person remained standing in the square—Wei Pengkun.

Standing amidst the mountain of corpses and sea of blood, Wei Pengkun trembled violently.

His golden armor was splattered with the blood of his comrades, and his Spirit-Slaying Holy Sword lay broken in two on the ground.

His legs were weak, his knees trembled, and finally, he collapsed to the ground.

He looked up at the boy holding the woman, his eyes filled with indescribable terror.

Ten breaths.

Three thousand elite soldiers, all dead.

This was not a battle; this was a massacre.

“Any last words?”

Kai walked up to him, looking down at him.

His purple eyes were unwavering, as if he were looking at an ant.

Wei Pengkun's lips trembled, his teeth chattered.

He wanted to say something, but only gurgling sounds came from his throat.

After a long silence, he finally managed to squeeze out a few words: " Kai, you can't kill me. I am the leader of the Divine Alliance. If you kill me, the Divine Race will not let you off. The two Supreme Elders are Golden Immortals, they will..."

"They are already dead."

Kai's voice was calm, as if he were talking about something insignificant. "Besides, even if they were here, they couldn't save you."

He raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword, its tip pressed against Wei Pengkun's chest.

Wei Pengkun's eyes widened, his pupils reflecting the purple sword light.

He felt the aura of death, something more primal than any power, chaos, nothingness, the end of all living beings.

He opened his mouth, wanting to beg for mercy, to negotiate, to threaten, to say anything that could save his life.

But Kai didn't give him any more time.

The sword tip gently extended.

Chaotic fire surged from the sword, engulfing Wei Pengkun.

Purple flames spread from his chest, devouring flesh and blood, holy light, and even his soul.

Wei Pengkun let out a piercing scream, a sound that pierced the hall, the plaza, and the clouds.

His body twisted, struggled, and dissipated in the flames.

The power of holy light was like ice and snow before the blazing sun, unable to withstand it for even a moment.

In less than a breath, the screams ceased abruptly.

Wei Pengkun, the leader of the Divine Alliance, the helmsman of the strongest force in the Sixteenth Heaven, who had commanded hundreds of thousands of cultivators and ruled the Northern Region for tens of thousands of years, had turned into a pile of ashes. A gust of wind blew by, scattering the ashes and leaving nothing behind.

Kai sheathed the Dragon-Slaying Sword, glanced at the pile of ashes drifting in the wind, and turned to walk out of the hall.

Behind him, the Divine Alliance Hall began to collapse under the burning of the chaotic fire.

Golden holy runes exploded in the flames, reducing the array built up over tens of thousands of years to ruins. The exquisitely carved murals and statues symbolizing the glory of the gods were all engulfed by the flames.

The flames soared into the sky, dyeing the entire sky golden-red, and the towering fire could be seen for hundreds of miles around. Jiang Xuelan, clinging to his back, looked at the sea of fire behind them, her lips moving slightly, “He killed…how many people…”

“It doesn’t matter anymore,”

Kai’s voice was calm. “What matters is that no one else will die.”

He leaped up, transforming into a purple streak of light, carrying Jiang Xuelan as they flew towards Freedom Valley.

The purple streak of light pierced the sky, illuminating the night sky of the Northern Wilderness.

Behind them, the Divine Alliance's main hall slowly collapsed in the sea of fire. The roof crumbled, golden tiles raining down, crashing onto the plaza with dull thuds.

The Divine Alliance, which had ruled the Sixteen Heavens for tens of thousands of years, was utterly annihilated at this moment.

…

Freedom Valley.

The ruins lay silent in the vast twilight, like a gigantic skeleton.

The once bustling valley was now nothing but broken walls and rubble.

Most of the stone walls had collapsed, their charred surfaces bearing the marks of swords and axes.

The city gates were gone, leaving only two crooked pillars, still bearing the marks of the divine light's scorching heat—remnants of the great battle months ago.

The air was thick with the smell of scorched earth and decay, mingled with a faint stench of blood.

The wind swept through the ruins, swirling ashes and dust like countless silent sighs.

The city's stone halls, wooden houses, training grounds, and meditation rooms were all reduced to ruins.

The meticulously carved stone pillars lay askew, their broken ends covered in moss.

Broken weapons and dried bloodstains lay scattered across the training grounds, the blood now a deep brown, seeping into the cracks in the stones, seemingly never to fade.

Skeletons lay scattered throughout the ruins, some belonging to Free Valley warriors, others to divine cultivators.

They were indistinguishable, lying there silently, exposed to the wind and rain.

To the east of Free Valley once stood the Elder Council, where the most sturdy stone hall had also collapsed halfway.

The remaining stone wall bore the motto of Freedom Valley: “Give me liberty or give me death.”

Three of the five characters had been burned away by holy light, leaving only the word “no liberty.”

The nunnery to the south had completely collapsed, and wild grasses grew from the cracks in the rubble, swaying in the twilight as if mourning the lives lost.

Kai carried Jiang Xuelan onto the ruins.

He looked around and remained silent for a long, long time.

He remembered the day he first came to Freedom Valley.

Back then, the valley was brightly lit, filled with cultivators and laughter.

Lin Yuan greeted him at the city gate, a burly man laughing like a child.

A tall, thin man dueled with others in the martial arts arena, refusing to admit defeat when he lost.

Old Zhao carried a bowl of wine around, seeking out drinkers and boasting to everyone that Freedom Valley's spirit wine was the best in the world.

A middle-aged woman busied herself in the kitchen, bringing out bowls of steaming spirit valley porridge, never mincing words, but filling everyone's bowl to the brim.

Old Xu dozed off in the library, studying the jade slips; Zhao Tieshan taught the new recruits swordsmanship in the training ground, demonstrating again and again until he was drenched in sweat.

Their voices and smiles were still so clear, as if he had seen them just yesterday.

But they were all gone.

To protect this land, to keep the flag of Freedom Valley flying under this sky, to protect their comrades, to protect him, they fell one by one. Never to wake again.

Kai clenched his fists.

His nails dug into his palms, piercing his skin and drawing blood.

Purple blood dripped from between his fingers, staining the scorched ground purple.

But he seemed not to feel any pain. He just stood there, silently looking at the ruins, at his former home.

" Kai..."

Jiang Xuelan leaned on his back, her voice weak.

She felt his body stiffen for a moment, and she felt the almost uncontrollable emotions surging from within him, "Freedom Valley... are there any survivors?"

Kai closed his eyes.

He spread his divine sense outwards, the power of chaos transforming into invisible ripples that spread outwards from him in all directions.

A hundred miles, a thousand miles, two thousand miles in radius—his divine sense covered the entire Northern Region, penetrating mountains and dense forests, penetrating the depths of the earth.

His divine sense swept through countless corners, searching for those familiar, faint auras.

Then he sensed them.

In a valley in the wasteland, dozens of faint auras gathered together, their auras mixed with fear, exhaustion, and despair, yet they were still alive, still waiting.

Further into the deep mountains and forests, scattered auras hid deep within ancient trees, afraid to make a sound.

Deep within abandoned mine tunnels, several faint auras lay hidden underground, surviving by consuming the residual energy of spirit ore.

There were still people alive.

Kai opened his eyes.

“Yes,”

he said, his voice soft but steady, “and many more are still alive.”

He put Jiang Xuelan down from his back, letting her lean against a broken stone pillar.

The stone pillar still bore the marks of the holy light’s scorching, but it had cooled.

He took off his blue robe and draped it over her shoulders.

The robe still retained his body heat, and Jiang Xuelan wrapped it tightly around herself, the warmth relaxing her tense body.

“Wait for me here,” Kai said.

“Where are you going?” Jiang Xuelan’s voice was slightly panicked.

“I’m going to find them.” Kai turned, looking at the boundless wasteland in the twilight, “To bring the people of Freedom Valley home.”

Jiang Xuelan didn’t ask any more questions. She knew that no one could stop Kai from doing what he was going to do.

She also knew that he would definitely return. He had never let her down.

Kai leaped up, transforming into a purple streak of light, rushing into the vast twilight.

Deep in the Northern Wasteland, a hidden valley.

This valley was nestled between two high mountains, its entrance extremely narrow, allowing only one person to pass sideways.

The entrance was mostly blocked by collapsed boulders, covered with vines and shrubs, making it impossible to tell from the outside that a hidden world lay within.

In the valley, there was a small clearing with several dilapidated thatched huts.

Dozens of remnants of the Free Valley were hiding there.

They had been hiding here for so long that even they themselves probably couldn’t say for sure.

When they first arrived, they thought the gods would soon come knocking, and they lived in constant fear, taking turns keeping watch and daring not to close their eyes.

After several days, the gods didn't come, and they began to wonder if they could ever return to Freedom Valley. After several more

days, their companions sent out to scout hadn't returned, and they began to despair.

Later, they dared not send anyone out anymore.

Because every person sent out meant one less person.

Their clothes were already tattered, their once uniform battle robes reduced to scraps of cloth barely covering their bodies.

Everyone had wounds; some were dried wounds covered with black scabs; others were festering wounds, emitting a putrid stench.

Their weapons were incomplete; some swords had broken tips, some knives had chipped blades, and some were reduced to half a spear shaft.

Many people's cultivation was regressing because without spiritual energy to replenish their strength, their bodies were being overworked.

Their eyes were filled with fear and despair.

Every day was filled with trepidation, ears perked up for any sound outside, terrified of hearing the horns of the gods' search.

Every time the wind picked up and rustled the leaves, someone would reflexively grip their weapon.

Every night before falling asleep, someone worried whether they would wake up the next day.

They thought Freedom Valley was finished.

They thought Kai was dead.

They thought there was no hope left in this life.

Until someone saw that purple streak of light on the horizon. “What’s that?”

A sharp-eyed young cultivator was the first to notice. He stood at the valley entrance, looking at the sky through the gaps in the vines.

His voice drew the attention of the others, and everyone looked up.

A purple streak of light was flying in at incredible speed across the sky.

It trailed a long, fiery tail, seemingly splitting the sky in two.

The purple light wasn’t blinding, yet it possessed a captivating allure.

It paused for a moment in the sky, as if sensing something, then suddenly changed direction, flying straight towards the valley.

Its speed was too fast for anyone to react.

The purple light landed on the clearing in the center of the valley. The light dissipated, revealing a figure before everyone. He wore

a blue inner robe, his figure tall and straight. A long sword hung at his waist, its scabbard ancient and simple. His face was stern, and his purple eyes shone brightly in the twilight.

A faint purple aura surrounded him, a subtle yet warm glow that enveloped the entire valley.

Kai.

Everyone was stunned.

As if frozen in place, as if struck by lightning, as if witnessing a hallucination.

No one spoke, no one moved, no one could believe their eyes.

The valley was silent except for the sound of the wind.

A young warrior was the first to recover.

His lips trembled violently, and large tears welled up in his eyes.

He recognized that person, the one who had led them in battle, the one who had fought his way through the army of the gods, the one who had been besieged by two supreme elders of the gods and whose physical body had been destroyed in the end.

“Mr. Chen…?”

His voice trembled, incredulous yet filled with an overwhelming sense of anticipation. “Is it really Mr. Chen? Mr. Chen has returned?”

Kai looked at them, at his comrades covered in wounds, their eyes filled with fear, their clothes stained with blood.

His gaze swept over each face, some he knew by name, some he had only met a few times, some complete strangers.

But their eyes were the same, the eyes of those who had suddenly seen the light of dawn after a long and desperate ordeal.

He remained silent for a moment.

“I’ve come to take you home.”

Five words, calm and brief, as if stating something utterly ordinary.

But those five words brought tears to everyone’s eyes.

The young warrior knelt on the ground with a thud, trembling with sobs.

The old cultivator beside him pounded his chest, wailing as if releasing all the pent-up fear.

Two others clung to each other, weeping uncontrollably.

Some stood there, stunned, tears streaming silently down their faces.

Some knelt and kowtowed, their foreheads striking the cold earth, crying out, “Mr. Chen.”

“Mr. Chen, you’re alive…you’re really alive…”

An old cultivator with gray hair walked shakily to Kai, his eyes filled with tears, his voice hoarse like a leaky drum, “I thought…I thought I’d never see you again in this life.”

Kai reached out and supported the old man’s swaying body. “The Divine Alliance has been destroyed by me.”

All the weeping stopped abruptly.

The valley was silent for a moment, then erupted in chaos.

“Destroyed?!”

“The Divine Alliance has been destroyed? That forever superior Divine Alliance?”

“Where’s Wei Pengkun? Where’s that madman Wei Pengkun?”

Kai’s voice remained calm: “Wei Pengkun is dead, dead by my sword. The Divine Alliance’s main hall is now in ruins. From now on, no one will be able to bully you anymore.”

He spoke as if he were discussing the weather.

But no one thought he was exaggerating.

Because they saw his cultivation level: sixth rank of True Immortal.

When Kai was at the third rank of True Immortal, he was practically invincible in the Sixteenth Heaven.

Now, this cultivation level was enough to make him stand out among the heroes of the Sixteenth Heaven.

More importantly, they sensed something from him, something indescribable.

It was absolute confidence, not arrogance, not pride, but a confidence forged through countless life-and-death battles.

A person with this kind of confidence doesn't need to speak loudly; every word carries the power of thunder.

The valley was silent for a moment.

Then, cheers erupted.

It was hope bursting forth from despair, the flame of life rekindled from the brink of despair.

Cries, laughter, and cheers mingled together, echoing through the valley.

People embraced, knelt on the ground, looked up to the sky, and wept bitterly.

Some knelt and kowtowed to Kai, others knelt and kowtowed towards the east, the direction of Freedom Valley.

"Freedom Valley is still here! We are not dead!"

"Mr. Chen is back! Mr. Chen is back!"

“Home! Home!”

Kai looked at them, his purple eyes showing no emotion.

But he raised his right hand, and a chaotic power condensed in his palm, transforming into a pale purple light shield that enveloped everyone.

“Let’s go,” he said, “back to Freedom Valley.”

In the following days, Kai traveled to every corner of the Northern Region.

He went to the deepest forests, stepping on wild grass taller than a person, pushing aside vines that blocked out the sky, searching in the darkest depths of the dense forests.

He went to the most dangerous cliffs, climbing the slippery rock walls, and found the remnants of the Spirit Clan who had been hiding in the caves for months.

Having explored the abandoned underground palace and found the Free Valley cultivators feeding on spirit ore residue in the underground passages dozens of feet deep,

he brought back a group of people, then another group, and yet another group.

Each time a purple streak of light appeared on the horizon, a new group of people appeared on the ruins of Free Valley.

They emerged from the mountains and fields, from the underground caves, and from the city of rogue cultivators.

More and more survivors gathered, and more and more people embarked on their journey home.

A continuous stream of people appeared on the wasteland—the former Free Valley members who had come from all directions, people who had heard ” Kai is back” and had emerged from their hiding places.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the Northern Region.

Cultivators of various races, once oppressed, enslaved, and hunted by the gods, emerged from their hiding places and converged on Freedom Valley.

Among them were rogue cultivators of the human race, remnants of the demon race, and survivors of the spirit race.

They were ragged and wounded, but their eyes held a long-lost light—hope.

On the ruins of Freedom Valley, houses began to be rebuilt.

Lacking tools, they salvaged usable materials from the rubble.

Lacking timber, they felled spirit trees in the mountains.

Lacking stone, they mined from abandoned veins.

Lacking iron, they dismantled broken weapons from the ruins and reforged them.

Lacking spirit stones, the resources Kai brought back from the divine alliance’s treasury were enough to support the entire reconstruction.

Stone halls, wooden houses, training grounds, and cultivation rooms—brick by brick, they were rebuilt.

No one complained, no one cried out in exhaustion.

Because everyone knew in their hearts that this time was different; this time, the gods would not return.

The city wall was the first to be repaired.

The stone wall that had been blasted down by the gods had been rebuilt, higher, thicker, and stronger than before.

The wall was covered with protective runes of the Daoist sect, carved by Kai himself.

Each rune contained the power of the laws of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, several times stronger than the defensive formation of Free Valley back then .

A protective barrier of chaotic power was also laid out, based on Kai's cultivation level, with chaotic power constantly circulating, enough to withstand the full force of an attack from a Golden Immortal.

Kai stood on the city wall, watching all this.

Below him lay his rebuilt homeland, and in the distance stretched the vast northern wilderness.

The two moons still hung high in the sky, but today, their colors seemed less eerie.

Silver and red moonlight shone on the ruins of Free Valley, on the busy people, casting long, long shadows.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside him.

Her white robes had been replaced with clean ones, made of spirit silk that Kai had brought back from the Divine Alliance's treasury.

Her face was still somewhat pale, but she could stand on her own. Her

spiritual power was slowly recovering, her wounds were healing, and while the damage to her soul still needed time to heal, it was no longer a major problem.

Fear and despair were gone from her eyes, replaced by a quiet resolve.

” Kai,” she said

, a slight smile playing on her lips as she looked at the busy people, “Have you found the Spirit Clan?”

“Yes,” Kai nodded. “Elder Qingxuan is still alive, and Feng Xue’er is still alive. There are still a few dozen remnants of the Spirit Clan hiding deep within the Myriad Spirit Ancient Forest. I’ve already sent people to retrieve them.”

Jiang Xuelan nodded, saying nothing more.

She simply watched the scene below the city, watching the people rebuilding their homes.

Free Valley was alive.The day Elder Qingxuan

was brought back to Freedom Valley was perfect.

Kai’s men arrived deep within the Myriad Spirits Ancient Forest and located the remnants of the Spirit Race who had been hiding there for months.

The Spirit Race, naturally close to nature, found it easier to survive in the forest than humans, but also harder to detect.

They hid in the crevices between trees and in underground root caves, blending their presence into the surrounding vegetation.

Initially, they dared not emerge, only cautiously revealing themselves upon hearing the name ” Kai.” Each was emaciated, yet their eyes shone brightly.

Elder Qingxuan wore a tattered gray robe, his white hair even whiter than before, his face more wrinkled, yet his eyes remained bright.

When he emerged from the forest and saw Freedom Valley being rebuilt in the distance, he stopped.

He stood there, tears streaming down his face, his body trembling slightly, as if about to kneel.

Kai personally greeted him at the city gate.

Elder Qingxuan broke free from the Spirit Clan disciples who were supporting him, strode to Kai, and knelt down.

His knees struck the stone slab with a dull thud.

Had Kai not reached out to steady him, his forehead would have hit the ground.

“Mr. Chen…”

His voice trembled, and cloudy tears streamed down his deeply lined cheeks, dripping onto the stone slab. “I thought… I thought I would never see you again in this life… The Spirit Clan thought… I thought we would never see you return…”

He wept like a child, a Spirit Clan elder who had lived for hundreds of years now prostrate on the ground, sobbing uncontrollably.

The remaining members of the Spirit Clan behind him also knelt down, dozens of them knelt on the ground, kowtowing to Kai.

Kai helped him up, supporting his arm to steady him. “Elder Qingxuan, the Spirit Clan is not dead.”

Elder Qingxuan raised his head, his cloudy old eyes filled with tears.

“As long as one person lives, the Spirit Race is not dead.”

Kai’s voice wasn’t loud, but it was as steady as a rock. “Elder, from now on, no one can hunt you down anymore.”

Elder Qingxuan nodded vigorously.

He raised his sleeve to wipe away tears, his cuff soaked.

He turned around and said to the remnants of the Spirit Race behind him, “The reconstruction of the Spirit Race begins today. Every brick, every tile of the reconstruction must remember who gave us this opportunity.”

The Spirit Race people responded in unison.

Feng Xue’er stepped out from the crowd. Her face was pale, and she was much thinner than before, but her eyes were still as bright as ever.

She walked up to Kai, didn’t kneel, but looked at him deeply, and then smiled.

“Mr. Chen.”

Kai nodded to her.

She turned and walked towards the Spirit Race’s area in the ruins, bent down, and picked up the first stone.

…

The news of the destruction of the Divine Alliance caused a huge uproar in the Sixteenth Heaven.

No one believed that the Divine Alliance, the strongest power ruling the Sixteenth Heaven, had been destroyed so easily, until someone saw the burning palace with their own eyes.

The palace had been reduced to a charred skeleton; its once magnificent golden roof had collapsed to the ground, the molten gold solidified into twisted shapes.

The once invincible Holy Light cultivators had all turned to ashes, leaving not even bones behind.

Only purple chaotic fire still flickered on the ruins, slowly devouring the remaining Holy Light power.

Those people stood before the ruins, looking at each other in disbelief.

“The Divine Alliance… is really destroyed.”

“Destroyed by one person.”

” Kai.”

These two words stirred up a storm in the Sixteenth Heaven.

Deepest in the ruins, Kai found the Divine Alliance’s treasury.

The treasury was hidden in the deepest part of the ruins, hundreds of feet underground, protected by seven layers of ultimate restrictions.

The chaotic fire used to destroy the palace had not spread here, but the seven layers of restrictions did not survive because of their strong defenses, but because their paths were too deep and too hidden, thus avoiding the fire.

These seven layers of restrictions were the most advanced protective formation of the Divine Alliance. Each layer contained holy light laws at the Golden Immortal level. Together, they formed a barrier that even a Golden Immortal could hardly shake.

The light of the restrictions flowed through the underground passage, radiating an awe-inspiring and inviolable pressure.

Any True Immortal cultivator who approached would be devoured by the holy light laws within the restrictions, their meridians severed, and they would die.

But Kai simply reached out and grabbed.

Chaos fire surged from his palm, transforming into seven purple fire dragons, each attacking one of the seven layers of restrictions.

These dragons were not large, only as thick as an arm, but they spewed the purest chaos fire from their mouths.

The moment the flames touched the restrictions, the holy light laws melted and collapsed rapidly, like thin snow meeting the scorching sun, without even a crisp sound.

The seven layers of restrictions held out for less than ten breaths before the chaos fire.

A heavy door slowly opened, revealing the true face of the treasure vault to Kai.

The vast space, hundreds of feet in diameter, had an extremely high dome, almost invisible at the top.

It was filled with resources plundered from the Sixteenth Heaven by the Divine Alliance over tens of thousands of years.

Mountains of crystals illuminated the entire treasure vault with multicolored light, making it as bright as day.

Rows of pills, jade bottles, jade boxes, and jade gourds were stacked on crystal shelves, their rich fragrance permeating the entire vault; a single whiff was enough to feel spiritual energy surging through one's meridians. A dazzling

array of magical artifacts—weapons, armor, talismans, and spiritual treasures—radiated brilliant spiritual light.

Rows of cultivation manuals were embedded in the walls, ranging from the most basic True Immortal cultivation methods to Golden Immortal

level secret texts; many of these manuals were yellowed with age, clearly ancient artifacts from tens of thousands of years ago.

Deep within the vault stood a solitary stone platform, upon which rested a black iron box.

The box had no restrictions, yet the aura it emitted was the oldest in the entire vault.

Kai walked over and opened the box.

Inside was an ancient jade slip, made of a peculiar material—not ordinary jade, but a black crystal he had never seen before.

Kai put the box away, intending to return to the Seventeenth Heaven and show it to Gui Yuanzi and the others.

He turned around, facing the mountain of treasure resources.

He no longer picked them up piece by piece, collecting them one by one, as he had done before.

He directly opened his storage ring and began stuffing in large quantities of crystals, pills, magical artifacts, and cultivation manual jade slips.

Tens of thousands of crystals, tens of thousands of pills, thousands of magical artifacts, and tens of thousands of jade slips—the accumulated wealth of the Divine Alliance over tens of thousands of years, enough for all the cultivators of Free Valley to cultivate for hundreds of years.

He collected them without hesitation, without any politeness, as if it were perfectly natural.

Because he knew that these things were the blood and sweat of the cultivators of all races in the Sixteenth Heaven.

How many people had the Divine Alliance killed, how much had they looted, to build this treasure trove?

These things should have been returned to the people of this land long ago.

Now, no one in the Sixteenth Heaven could rival him.

He could take all the treasure resources with him, take them to Free Valley, and take them to those who needed them.

Chapter 6521 - 6530

Back in Freedom Valley, Kai placed the Demon-Suppressing Tower in the center of the plaza.

He channeled his spiritual energy into the tower, and its black body began to tremble.

The trembling intensified, and then the tower began to expand, growing from the size of a palm to about a foot, then to about ten feet, and finally to over ten feet. The

tower rose majestically from the ground in the center of the plaza, like a small mountain.

The runes on the tower glowed with a dim light, and the aura of the time law surged from within, causing those around to involuntarily take a few steps back.

“The Demon-Suppressing Tower can accelerate time. One day outside is equivalent to a hundred days inside. I will place the resources from the treasure vault into the tower, and everyone will enter in batches to cultivate.”

Elder Qingxuan and the others, knowing the power of the Demon-Suppressing Tower, had eyes gleaming with excitement.

With so many resources, coupled with the time law of the Demon-Suppressing Tower, cultivation would undoubtedly be twice as effective.

All the resources from the treasure vault were moved into the Demon-Suppressing Tower.

Mountains of crystals, rows of pills, a dazzling array of magical artifacts, and walls of cultivation manuals and jade slips were all moved into the tower, filling every inch of its interior space.

The moment the tower doors closed, a dim light began to flow across its surface, the laws of time began to activate, and the flow of time within the tower rapidly increased—one day outside was equivalent to a hundred days inside.

Cultivators entered the Demon-Suppressing Tower in batches, cultivating, healing, and breaking through to higher levels.

One group went in, another came out, in a continuous cycle.

A hundred days inside the tower equaled one day outside; this time difference allowed everyone's cultivation speed to reach an unbelievable level.

Cultivation that would normally take decades to recover could be restored in just a few days inside. Those with serious injuries secluded themselves to heal within the tower, emerging fully recovered.

Old cultivators whose cultivation had stagnated for years broke through bottlenecks within the tower, emerging at a higher level.

Kai himself also entered the Demon-Suppressing Tower.

He sat cross-legged on the ninth floor, surrounded by piles of crystals and pills.

He circulated the Mind-Concentrating Technique, extracting the spiritual energy from the resources and absorbing it into his meridians, transforming it into chaotic power.

One crystal after another was drained, their once brilliant colors fading into grayish-white powder.

One pill after another was refined, their immense medicinal power surging into his meridians, devoured, transformed, and absorbed by the chaotic power.

He sat in the tower for a hundred days, while only one day passed outside.

Mid-stage, late-stage, peak of the sixth rank of True Immortal Realm.

Seventh rank of True Immortal Realm.

He opened his eyes. The chaotic energy in his purple eyes was even denser, as if they contained the primordial chaos of the entire universe.

With his cultivation breaking through to the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm, the chaotic power in his meridians became even more abundant and condensed, increasing several times over.

The protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture were also evolving simultaneously, the golden dragon patterns becoming denser than before, covering every inch of his skin.

But it wasn’t enough.

He sensed a bottleneck. Breaking through from the seventh to the eighth rank of True Immortal Realm wasn’t something that could be achieved simply through the accumulation of spiritual energy.

He needed time to mature, to gain real combat experience, and to hone his skills on the brink of death.

He stood up and walked out of the Demon-Suppressing Tower.

After leaving the tower, Kai stood on the city wall of Freedom Valley for a long time.

The city wall had been rebuilt, higher and thicker than before.

It was covered with protective runes of the Daoist sect and restrictions of chaotic power. The runes flowed with a pale golden light, intertwining with the pale purple chaotic power to form a defensive line that no one could ignore.

Every stone in the city wall had been carefully selected, and every gap had been filled with an adhesive made from spirit ore powder.

He personally inspected every rune and every array eye to confirm that the restrictions were functioning properly.

Outside the city wall, new houses were rising from the ground.

These houses were no longer temporary thatched huts and simple stone houses, but formal residences carefully built with materials obtained from the treasure vault of the Divine Clan Alliance.

The streets had been redesigned, with wide and flat stone slab roads replacing the previous dirt roads.

In the training ground, cultivators were practicing, the crisp sound of clashing weapons and shouts of techniques rising and falling.

The cultivators of Free Valley were practicing in the plaza.

They stood in neat rows, practicing a sword formation under the guidance of an elderly cultivator.

Sword energy crisscrossed, spiritual light flashed, and the sword formation of dozens of people moved like a giant, sharp sword.

Seeing Kai emerge from the Demon-Suppressing Tower, everyone stopped what they were doing and bowed in unison.

“Mr. Chen!”

The voices were uniform and full of vigor.

Their eyes were filled with reverence; their expressions were not like looking at a person, but more like looking at a living god.

Kai nodded.

“The Divine Alliance has been destroyed,”

he said, his voice calm, but everyone could hear every word he spoke. “But our enemies are not only the Divine Alliance. In the Sixteenth Heaven, many other forces are watching. They don’t know how strong we are, so we must let them know.”

He paused, his purple eyes sweeping over everyone in the plaza.

“From today onwards, Free Valley will be renamed Free City.”

The plaza was silent for a moment.

Then, cheers shook the heavens and the earth.

“Free City!”

“Free City!”

“The Sixteenth Heaven, we rule!”

Cheers echoed through the valley, soaring into the sky.

Those remnants of soldiers who had once hidden in the deep mountains and forests, those survivors who had eked out a living in underground caves, those cultivators of various races who had passively accepted their fate under the rule of the gods, now stood in the plaza, roaring to the heavens.

Their voices merged into a torrent, releasing all the humiliation and despair brought on by tens of thousands of years of oppression.

Jiang Xuelan stood beneath the city wall, watching the young man surrounded by the crowd, a slight smile playing on her lips.

Her complexion had regained its rosy hue, her spiritual power had recovered to eighty or ninety percent, and she was radiant. She looked at Kai, her eyes full of smiles.

Kai felt her gaze and turned his head.

Their eyes met in the air; he said nothing, only nodded slightly. She also simply nodded.

That was enough.

That night, Kai entrusted the affairs of Free City to Elder Qingxuan and Zheng Yuan, Lin Yuan's disciple.

Zheng Yuan was Lin Yuan's most prized disciple. Although his talent wasn't top-tier, he was steady and reliable, with a calm and unwavering character.

Kai gave him a lot of instructions.

The instructions covered the maintenance of Free City's formations, resource allocation, cultivation plans, and strategies for dealing with powerful enemies.

He inscribed the ultimate protective runes of the Daoist sect on the city walls and set up protective barriers of chaotic power around the city.

These runes and barriers were powerful enough to withstand attacks from a peak ninth-grade True Immortal.

He also took a large sum of resources from the treasury of the Divine Clan Alliance and distributed them to the cultivators of Free City for daily cultivation and emergency needs. "Elder Qingxuan."

He stood on the city wall, looking at Freedom City in the night.

The city lights twinkled, warm glow streaming through the windows onto the streets.

Elder Qingxuan bowed, his white beard fluttering in the night breeze. “Mr. Chen, rest assured, this old man will protect Freedom City. As long as I have a breath left, I will not let this city fall again.”

Kai patted his shoulder, saying nothing more.

In the side hall, Jiang Xuelan had changed into a clean white dress.

Her long, ink-black hair was simply tied up with a silver hairpin.

Her complexion was rosy, her spiritual energy abundant; the damage to her soul had largely healed. She stood by the window, looking at the night sky outside, her eyes full of anticipation.

Two moons hung high, one silver, one red, their light streaming through the windowpanes onto her.

Her shadow was long, cast on the wall behind her.

“Are you ready?” Kai entered the side hall.

Jiang Xuelan turned and smiled at him. “Ready.”

Her tone was soft, but firm.

She knew where Kai was going: the Seventeenth Heaven, a place a hundred times more dangerous, but also a hundred times more exciting, than the Sixteenth Heaven.

She might not be able to offer much help, but at least she wanted to stand by his side.

Kai took out the silver-white token from his robes.

The token felt warm in his palm, the nine-tailed fox pattern glowing faintly, and the runes on the back began to slowly flow.

He infused it with spiritual power, and silver-white light surged from the token, growing brighter and stronger.

A moment later, a void passage opened above Freedom City.

It was a pitch-black vortex, within which starlight flickered faintly.

Ancient spatial power surged from the vortex, carrying an aura of vastness and majesty.

The cultivators of Freedom City stopped what they were doing, looking up at the sky with awe in their eyes.

“Let’s go,” Kai said, taking Jiang Xuelan’s hand.

Her hand was warm, her palm pressed against his, their fingers intertwined tightly.

The two leaped into the air, transforming into a purple streak of light, and plunged into the void passage.

The vortex slowly contracted, swallowing the purple light.

Then it shrank, and shrank again, finally dissipating into the night sky, leaving only a faint silver light, like a few falling meteors.

Elder Qingxuan stood on the city wall, watching the direction where the void passage disappeared, remaining silent for a long time.

The night wind ruffled his white beard and hair, and the moonlight stretched his shadow long.

Behind him was the brightly lit Free City, from which came the sounds of cultivators laughing, training, and singing. This city was coming alive.

“Mr. Chen, take care,” he said softly.

Then he turned around and shouted to the cultivators below the city wall, “Continue training! Don’t slack off! When Mr. Chen isn’t here, you must work even harder!”

In the void passage, Kai and Jiang Xuelan’s figures were enveloped by spatial power, flying towards the Seventeenth Heaven at an unimaginable speed.

The surrounding scenery constantly changed, sometimes a brilliant sea of stars, sometimes distorted spatial folds, sometimes a fleeting unknown world.

The void passage was silent, save for the hissing sound of spatial energy flowing through it, like wind whistling through a canyon.

It was Jiang Xuelan’s first time traversing a void passage, and she was somewhat nervous.

Her hands gripped Kai’s arm tightly, her knuckles white.

The constantly shifting scenery around her made her dizzy, and the oppressive feeling of spatial energy made it hard to breathe.

Kai looked down at her.

His purple eyes shone brightly in the darkness of the void, the light not dazzling, but gradually melting away her unease.

“Don’t be afraid,” he said calmly, “I’m here.”

Jiang Xuelan nodded.

She took a deep breath, and the turmoil in her heart gradually subsided.

Yes, he was there.

He had never let her down.

The Divine Alliance of the Sixteenth Heaven had been wiped out by him alone.

What did she have to fear?

A white dot of light appeared ahead.

The dot grew larger and brighter, from the size of a fist to the size of a washbasin, then to the size of a door.

Finally, it transformed into a massive exit—a vortex filled with white light, the other end of which led to a deep purple sky.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan burst out of the void passage and landed on the land of the Seventeenth Heaven.

The sky was deep purple, with three blazing suns hanging high. The golden, silver, and crimson rays of light shone on the earth, dyeing the distant mountains, the nearby forests, and the ground beneath their feet with magnificent hues. The spiritual

energy in the air was so dense that it was almost impenetrable, dozens of times denser than in the Sixteenth Heaven.

Each breath felt like swallowing a pill, with spiritual energy automatically circulating in their meridians, nourishing their limbs and bones.

Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, a hint of surprise flashing in her eyes. “The spiritual energy here… is so dense.”

Gui Yuanzi had been waiting for a long time at the exit of the void passage.

He knew that the young master would return today; Qingqiu had sensed the fluctuations of the token and told him.

He had been standing here since early morning, waiting from the first sliver of golden light on the horizon until the three blazing suns were high in the sky.

Seeing Kai's figure emerge from the void passage, his eyes instantly reddened.

He stepped forward, opening his mouth to say something, but his throat felt blocked, and he couldn't utter a single word.

The young master had returned.

Safe and sound.

"Young master! You're finally back!" Gui Yuanzi's voice trembled with tears, and he tried to kneel and kowtow again.

Kai reached out and stopped him. "Gui Yuanzi, this is Jiang Xuelan."

He turned to look at Jiang Xuelan. "Xuelan, this is the sect leader of Guiyuan Sect, Gui Yuanzi."

Jiang Xuelan bowed slightly in greeting. "Sect leader Guiyuan, I've heard so much about you."

Gui Yuanzi quickly returned the greeting, his movements awkward like a young boy. "Miss Jiang is too kind. The young master has been greatly appreciated for your care along the way." Jiang Xuelan

shook her head, a faint smile on her lips. "He's the one who took care of me."

Gui Yuanzi paused, then smiled.

As he smiled, tears streamed down his face again.

He raised his sleeve to wipe his eyes, laughing as he did so: "I'm losing my composure, I'm losing my composure. I'm getting old; I cry so easily."

Kai said nothing more.

His gaze passed over Gui Yuanzi and looked into the distance.

There, the dark clouds surrounding the Heavenly Supreme Venerable were still gathering, thicker and lower than seven days ago, almost pressing down from the sky to the ground.

Countless figures could be vaguely seen moving within the clouds, the cold glint of armor piercing through the clouds, and the sharpness of swords cutting through the sky.

The Holy Light cultivators of the Divine Abyss Pavilion stood in formation like mountains, the sword cultivators of the Heavenly Saint Palace had their banners blotting out the sun, and the Venerables of the Heavenly Supreme Palace were shrouded in mist.

The three armies had merged, and their combined forces had begun to attack the strongholds at the forefront of the Myriad Demon Ridge.

“Guiyuanzi, what’s the situation with Venerable Tianji?”

Guiyuanzi’s expression turned serious, and he forcibly suppressed his tears. “The armies of Shenyuan Pavilion and Tiansheng Palace have joined forces with Tianji Palace, totaling over 4,500 men, and have begun attacking several strongholds on the outskirts of Wanyao Ridge.

His Majesty Qingqiu has sent two batches of reinforcements, temporarily stabilizing the situation. But Venerable Tianji himself hasn’t made a move yet; he seems to be waiting for something.”

Kai nodded. “Let him wait.”

His voice was calm, but every word exuded a chilling confidence.

With the chaotic power of a seventh-grade True Immortal, Venerable Tianji, although a peak third-grade Golden Immortal, possessed his current strength, combined with the Great Luo Golden Scripture and

chaotic power, made the outcome uncertain. Qingqiu approached from afar.

Her white robes were as white as snow, her long hair as black as ink, and her steps were as light as if she were walking on the wind. She

looked more energetic than seven days ago; her complexion had regained its rosy hue, and her eyes had regained their sharpness.

She looked at Kai, then at Jiang Xuelan beside him, a playful smile flashing in her fox-like eyes.

“I thought you weren’t coming back,” she said, but there was no blame in her tone.

Kai smiled. “I will definitely keep my promise to His Majesty.”

Qingqiu’s gaze lingered on Jiang Xuelan for a moment.

The two women’s eyes met in the air, Qingqiu nodded slightly, and Jiang Xuelan nodded slightly as well.

There were no extra words, but they both understood.

“Let’s go.”

Qingqiu turned around and walked towards the Demon Emperor’s Palace. “There are still many things to do. The Heavenly Venerable’s army is already at the gate. If we don’t return soon, I will have to personally take to the battlefield.”

Kai and Jiang Xuelan followed behind her.

Behind him, three blazing suns hung high, their golden, silver, and crimson rays intertwining to paint the mountains of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge a magnificent golden-red hue.

In the distance, dark clouds continued to gather, blood-red light churning within them, killing intent coalescing into countless sharp blades.

The Heavenly Venerable's camp was situated on a hill three hundred miles north of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. The camp stretched for miles, its golden holy light banners fluttering in the wind. Standing atop the hill, the outline of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge was clearly visible; the mountain range, shrouded in thick fog, was now brightly lit, as if mocking him.

The Heavenly Venerable sat within his tent, his fingers lightly tapping the table.

The tent flap opened, and Elder Zhao strode in, clasping his hands in greeting, "Palace Master, Venerable Xuanbing and Venerable Holy Light have arrived."

The Heavenly Venerable stood up, a forced smile on his face. "Please."

The tent flap opened again, and two figures entered one after the other.

Venerable Xuanbing walked ahead, clad in an ice-blue robe, his long hair as white as snow, his face thin, with a hint of gloom in his eyes.

Upon entering the tent, he immediately surveyed the surroundings, his gaze lingering on each item as if assessing their value in spirit stones.

Venerable Shengguang followed behind, dressed in a white robe embroidered with golden sun patterns at the hem, his face gentle and his smile amiable; he didn't look like

someone who had come for war at all. Venerable Tianji invited the two to sit and ordered spirit tea to be served.

Venerable Xuanbing picked up his teacup, took a sip, his brow furrowing slightly before setting it down. "Palace Master Tianji, you summoned us in such a hurry just for tea?"

Venerable Tianji's smile faltered. "Palace Master Xuanbing, I have received news that Kai has returned to Ten Thousand Demon Ridge."

Venerable Xuanbing's fingers paused, a barely perceptible hint of apprehension flashing across his face. Venerable Shengguang's smile also faded, his teacup hovering in mid-air.

"Kai? Is that the owner of that purple divine soul?" Venerable Holy Light asked.

"Indeed."

Venerable Heavenly Extreme nodded. "He not only returned, but also brought a woman. According to our scouts, his cultivation has recovered to the seventh rank of True Immortal. The aura of chaotic power is even stronger than before."

A brief silence fell over the tent.

Venerable Profound Ice glanced at Venerable Holy Light, who was also looking at him. Their gazes met in the air and then quickly separated.

"Palace Master Heavenly Extreme,"

Venerable Profound Ice spoke, his voice slow, each word seeming to float from an ice cellar, "If you want to fight, then fight. But you have to tell us how."

Venerable Heavenly Extreme stood up, walked to the map hanging on the tent wall, and pointed to the Myriad Demon Ridge. "There are nine layers of restrictions surrounding the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, the first being the Misty Forest. I have the Barrier-Breaking Pearl, which can dispel the mist.

Breaking through the Misty Forest will lead to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge's gate. The gate is guarded by Qingqiu, as well as the Guiyuan Sect, Qingyun Sword Sect, and Wanfa Sect, so we cannot underestimate them."

He turned to look at Venerable Xuanbing and Venerable Shengguang. “Therefore, I need your combined efforts.”

Venerable Xuanbing was silent for a moment, then shook his head. “Palace Master Tianji, what you said is incorrect.”

“In what way?”

“I think there should be a hierarchy in attacking the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge; we can’t all rush in at once.” Venerable Xuanbing’s voice was cold, so cold that the temperature in the tent seemed to drop several degrees.

Venerable Tianji’s face darkened. “Palace Master Xuanbing, what do you mean by this? Are you afraid?”

Venerable Xuanbing stood up and walked to the map. “It’s not fear. It’s calculation. War cannot be fought with mere brute force; one must weigh the gains and losses. Palace Master Tianji, do you want our Shenyuan Pavilion to lead the charge?”

Venerable Tianji took a deep breath, suppressing his anger. “My intention is for the three parties to join forces and attack simultaneously. Shenyuan Pavilion will flank from the left, Tiansheng Palace from the right, and Tianji Palace will launch a frontal assault.”

Venerable Shengguang smiled.

The smile was gentle, but anyone could tell it was a fake. “Palace Master Tianji, your plan is too ambitious. You want us to flank from both sides while you reap the rewards from the front? You intend to keep that treasure all to yourself?”

Venerable Tianji clenched his fists. “Palace Master Shengguang, you’re wrong. I said I’d give you 50% of the treasure, 30% to Shenyuan Pavilion, and I’d keep only 20%. I’ve already conceded.”

Venerable Shengguang shook his head. “Dividing before and after the battle are two different things. Palace Master Tianji, you want us to fight first, and we’ll talk about the division after we win. If we lose, we’ll gain nothing and even lose disciples. I won’t do such a losing proposition.” Venerable Xuanbing

nodded. “I won’t do that either. Palace Master Tianji, let Tianji Palace lead the charge, and we’ll cooperate. We’ll support you from behind. If you break through, we’ll join in. If you can’t break through, we’ll retreat. That’s fair.”

Venerable Tianji’s face turned ashen.

He stared at Venerable Xuanbing, then at Venerable Shengguang, wishing he could slap those two old foxes to death.

But he couldn’t.

Of the 4,500 troops, the Heavenly Extreme Palace commanded 3,000, but without the Divine Abyss Pavilion and the Heavenly Saint Palace, he dared not attack the Myriad Demon Ridge.

If both sides were to suffer heavy losses, the Divine Abyss Pavilion and the Heavenly Saint Palace would not hesitate to turn on him.

He took a deep breath, suppressing his anger. “Alright. The Heavenly Extreme Palace will lead the charge. You will cooperate.”

Venerable Xuanbing and Venerable Shengguang exchanged a glance and nodded simultaneously.

A brief silence fell over the tent.

Venerable Tianji returned to the table, picked up his teacup, which had gone cold.

He took a sip and put the cup down.

“Attack first thing tomorrow morning.” …

Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

Demon Emperor’s Palace, side hall.

Kai, Qingqiu, Guiyuanzi, Qingyunzi, and the Grand Elder of the Myriad Laws Sect sat around a stone table.

A defensive map of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge was spread on the table; red markers indicated the camps of the divine army, and blue markers indicated the defensive lines of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

Qingqiu’s finger moved across the map. “The Heavenly Extreme Venerable’s army has advanced three thousand miles away. According to scouts, the two forces have joined together, with a total strength exceeding four thousand five hundred.”

Guiyuanzi’s expression was grave. “Four thousand five hundred, and we only have two thousand. Our strength is more than double.”

“But we are on the defensive

,” Qingqiu said. “Ten Thousand Demon Ridge has nine layers of restrictions, and demon warriors are lying in ambush in the Misty Forest. It won’t be so easy for them to break in.”

Kai remained silent.

He took a wooden box from his storage ring and placed it on the table.

Opening the box, a black stone lay silently on a blue silk cloth, the size of a fist, its surface entirely black.

It was so pure black that it didn’t reflect light at all, as if all light had been swallowed up by it.

Its surface was devoid of any patterns, carvings, or spiritual energy fluctuations; it was like an ordinary pebble picked up from a riverbank.

But its weight was wrong.

“I got this from the treasury of the Sixteenth Heaven God Alliance. I don’t know what it is. Take a look!” Kai said.

When Gui Yuanzi held it in his palm, his arm felt a slight heaviness; this fist-sized object weighed like a small mountain.

He examined it closely, turning it over and over, trying to probe it with his spiritual energy, but it was like throwing mud into the sea—it didn’t elicit any reaction.

He then tried to probe it with his divine sense, but it bounced back as soon as it touched the surface of the black stone. The rebound was slight, but it caused a sharp pain in his sea of consciousness.

“I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

Gui Yuanzi handed the black stone to Qingqiu, rubbing his temples. “The Guiyuan Sect’s Scripture Pavilion contains three thousand volumes of ancient books, recording almost all the known rare and precious materials of the Seventeen Heavens. But none of them match this black stone.

Its texture is unlike stone, jade, gold, or wood; it’s more like some kind of… some kind of space fragment compressed to its extreme.”

Qingqiu took the black stone and held it in her palm.

Her fingers were long and slender, white, a stark contrast to the pitch-black stone.

She closed her eyes and probed the black stone with her divine sense.

Her divine sense felt like it was diving into the deep sea, growing darker and heavier the deeper it went.

The black stone wasn't solid; instead, it was composed of layers upon layers of spatial folds, each fold sealing in an extremely ancient aura.

That aura was older than any ancient ruin in the Seventeen Heavens, so ancient that even she, the fox queen who had lived for tens of thousands of years, felt a sense of awe.

She continued to probe deeper.

In the seventh spatial fold, she captured a fragment of information.

The information was so ancient, so ancient that even the laws that contained it were nearly vanished.

She could barely make out a few words—no, not words, but the remnants of a will more primal than written characters, the

obsession left behind by a person or some being in the distant past .

"Chaos… Dao Palace…"

"Eighteen… Heavens…"

"Shattered… Void… Ascend…"

The will ended there.

The rest dissipated into endless time, becoming unrecognizable.

Qingqiu's consciousness was pushed out of the black stone by a gentle yet irresistible force. She opened her eyes, a complex expression flashing in her amber pupils.

"Your Majesty?" Guiyuanzi asked.

Seeing the subtle change in Qingqiu's expression, he knew this black stone was no ordinary object.

Qingqiu placed the black stone back in the wooden box and remained silent for a long time.

The side hall was so quiet that only the rustling of leaves in the wind outside the window could be heard.

Kai looked at her, saying nothing, simply waiting.

"This isn't from the sixteenth heaven, nor from the seventeenth heaven,"

Qingqiu finally spoke, her voice lower than usual. "It fell from the world above."

"The world above?" Guiyuanzi paused, "Your Majesty means... the eighteenth heaven?"

Qingqiu nodded. The

moment that name was uttered, the atmosphere in the entire side hall changed.

The eighteenth heaven—that was a legendary place, a world even a Golden Immortal of the third rank like Qingqiu could only look up to.

It was said that the laws of heaven and earth in the eighteenth heaven were completely different; the spiritual energy there was the primordial energy from the beginning of chaos; and the cultivators there were born immortals.

"I sensed several remnants of will within this black stone,"

Qingqiu said slowly, each word carefully chosen. "One mentioned 'Chaos Dao Palace,' another mentioned 'shattering the void' and 'ascending.'

I suspect this black stone might be a relic left behind by an ancient powerful being, or a key to some other place. But its origin from the Eighteenth Heaven is beyond doubt."

Guiyuanzi gasped. "Something from the Eighteenth Heaven… how could it appear in the treasury of the Sixteenth Heaven God Alliance?"

"The Divine Alliance has ruled the Sixteen Heavens for tens of thousands of years, during which time they have annihilated countless sects and plundered countless treasures. It's not surprising that some of these items come from the Upper Realm,"

Qingqiu said, pushing the wooden box back to Kai. "You may not know, but there is an ancient lineage in the Eighteen Heavens called the Chaos Dao Palace. This lineage is extremely mysterious, rarely venturing into the mortal world, but every appearance is accompanied by a great upheaval in the heavens and earth.

If this black stone is truly related to the Chaos Dao Palace, then the secrets it contains are probably far beyond our imagination."

Kai picked up the black stone and held it in his palm.

The Chaos Dao Palace, the Eighteen Heavens, and the chaotic power that had mysteriously guided him to this point.

These clues were like a tattered spiderweb, held in his hand.

The chaotic power was the most primal force in the world, and the name Chaos Dao Palace also contained the word "chaos."

He didn't believe it was a coincidence.

Moreover, judging from the name, the Chaos Dao Palace seemed to be a Daoist sect.

The Great Luo Golden Scripture in his sea of consciousness was the possession of a Daoist ancestor.

Now that Chaos and Taoism have collided again, is all of this destined?

The black stone felt slightly hot in his palm.

The chaotic energy within him began to circulate automatically, creating a strange resonance with the black stone.

The resonance was faint, almost imperceptible, yet it was there.

Purple spiritual energy overflowed from his palm, enveloping the black stone. On its seemingly smooth surface, several fine lines, as thin as a hair, faintly appeared.

The lines vanished in an instant, as fast as an illusion.

But Kai saw them.

Qing Qiu saw them too.

“As expected.”

A knowing glint flashed in Qingqiu’s fox eyes. “I guessed right. This black stone can only be activated by the power of chaos. It’s not an ordinary token, but a guide left by the Chaos Dao Palace for the inheritor of the power of chaos.”

“Guidance?” Kai asked. “Guidance for what?”

“Guidance for you to ascend to the eighteenth heaven.”

Qingqiu looked at him and said, word by word, “The Chaos Dao Palace is in the eighteenth heaven. The power of chaos within you may very well come from that lineage.

This black stone is the key, but which door it opens, and how to open it, I don’t know. These answers will probably only be revealed when you truly step into the eighteenth heaven.”

Guiyuanzi opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but then swallowed it back.

The eighteenth heaven was a place that even a third-grade Golden Immortal might not be able to reach.

Although the young master was exceptionally talented, the difficulty of ascending from the seventeenth heaven to the eighteenth heaven was no less than ascending from mortal to immortality in one step.

But then he thought, the young master had come from a wisp of remnant soul to where he was today; every step had been fraught with difficulties and dangers.

The sixteenth to seventeenth heaven, and the seventeenth to eighteenth heaven, were merely the next steps to be taken by the young master.

Kai put the black stone back into his storage ring, his purple eyes showing little emotion. “We’ll talk about the eighteenth heaven later. Right now, let’s deal with the Heavenly Venerable.”

His voice was calm, but everyone could hear the certainty beneath that calm.

It wasn’t arrogance, nor conceit, but a composure honed through countless battles.

He didn’t say “block,” he didn’t say “repel,” he said “deal with.” In his eyes, the Heavenly Venerable was already dead. Qingqiu glanced at him, a slight smile playing on her lips.

This young man was becoming increasingly interesting.

Kai stood up and walked to the map.

His gaze swept over the densely packed markings, his mind racing.

Two thousand against four thousand five, a numerical disadvantage of more than double.

But they were on the defensive, holding the advantage of terrain.

Wan Yao Ridge had nine layers of restrictions, and demon warriors were lying in ambush in the Misty Forest; they could hold them off, the key was how.

“Your Majesty,” he pointed to the location of the Misty Forest, “How long can the Misty Forest hold them off?”

Qingqiu thought for a moment, “Two days at most. The Heavenly Venerable’s Barrier-Breaking Pearl is an ancient divine artifact, specifically designed to counter mist-type restrictions. Coupled with their superior numbers and relentless attacks, the Misty Forest’s defenses will be breached within two days.”

“Two days,”

Kai repeated, then nodded. “That’s enough. Our goal isn’t to keep them out. No matter how strong the nine layers of restrictions are, they’ll eventually be worn down by three times the force of our troops.

What we need to do is deplete their forces as much as possible before the restrictions are broken, and then eliminate the Heavenly Palace’s main force in one fell swoop on a pre-arranged battlefield.”

Qingyunzi stroked his white beard, a hint of approval in his eyes, “Mr. Chen’s thinking coincides with mine. Defense is for attrition, and attrition is for counterattack. The question is, where should we choose the pre-arranged battlefield?”

Kai’s finger traced down the map, stopping at an open area in front of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge gate, “Here.”

“At the mountain gate?” The Grand Elder of the Myriad Laws Sect frowned. “The mountain gate is the last line of defense. If we fight a

decisive battle here and suffer a defeat, the consequences will be unimaginable."

"We will not suffer a defeat." Kai's voice was not loud, but it was like an iron nail driven into everyone's heart. "Because Venerable Tianji will die here."

He paused and began to make arrangements.

"The first to third layers of restrictions will be defensive, not offensive. Utilize the natural barrier of the Misty Forest to deplete their vanguard at minimal cost.

The demon warriors are skilled in jungle warfare; have them ambush in the forest, attacking only isolated squads, striking and retreating without prolonging the fight." "

The fourth to sixth layers of restrictions will be defensive while retreating. Each retreat will inflict additional losses on them.

Drive the demon beasts of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge to the front lines, disrupting the Heavenly Palace's formation."

"The seventh to ninth layers of restrictions will be defensive, with no retreat. These are the final three barriers before the mountain gate, each heavily fortified.

Guiyuanzi will lead the Guiyuan Sect disciples to defend the seventh layer, Qingyunzi, the sect leader, will lead the Qingyun Sword Sect to defend the eighth layer, and the Wanfa Sect will defend the ninth layer.

The three layers will support each other; if one side is in trouble, both sides will provide simultaneous assistance."

"Your Majesty Qingqiu,"

Kai turned to Qingqiu, "you will oversee the mountain gate and control the overall situation. The demon warriors will harass from both sides,

cutting off their retreat and supplies. Once the Heavenly Palace army is bogged down at the mountain gate, they'll be trapped like turtles in a jar."

Qingqiu nodded slightly. "And what about you?"

"Me?"

A very faint smile appeared on Kai's lips. "I'll wait for Venerable Heavenly Extreme at the mountain gate. If he wants to step into Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, he'll have to step over me."

The night was as dark as ink, and the mountains of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge lay silent in the darkness, like a lurking beast.

A golden sun sank into the western mountains, and two suns, one silver-white and one crimson, rose in succession, casting eerie light upon the Misty Forest.

The mist shimmered with a ghostly silver-red hue in the moonlight, like an endless sea of blood.

From the depths of the forest came the low roars of demonic beasts, deep and long, echoing endlessly through the valleys.

The open space in front of the mountain gate had been cleared, and ancient runes were inscribed across a plaza several thousand feet in circumference.

These runes were personally carved by Qingqiu, each stroke imbued with the power of the demon race's bloodline.

On the mountain walls on either side of the plaza, the sword cultivators of the Qingyun Sword Sect had laid out the Ten Thousand Swords Returning to the Origin Formation, thousands of flying swords suspended in the air, their tips pointing outwards, their cold light shimmering like a galaxy.

The array masters of the Wanfa Sect had set up eighteen layers of overlapping restrictions around the plaza, layer upon layer, interlocking, turning the entire open space into an impregnable fortress.

Kai stood before the mountain gate, his azure robe fluttering in the night wind, the Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist, its purple light intertwining with the moonlight in the night sky.

He closed his eyes, the chaotic power within his body flowing slowly.

His cultivation at the seventh rank of the True Immortal Realm was completely stable, every inch of his flesh, every meridian, every bone containing destructive power.

The protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture were faintly visible beneath his skin, the pale golden dragon patterns ready to be activated at any moment.

Jiang Xuelan stood behind him, her white robes as white as snow.

She had changed into the spirit armor Kai had brought back from the Divine Alliance's treasury, and held a silver-white longsword in her hand, its blade engraved with ancient runes.

Her face was calm, but her fingers gripping the hilt were slightly white.

"Are you afraid?" Kai didn't open his eyes.

"No," Jiang Xuelan's voice was soft, "I'm here."

At dawn, before the first rays of the sun had risen, only a silver moon and a red moon shone brightly in the sky, casting their silver-red light upon the Misty Forest.

The mist flowed slowly in the breeze, like an endless sea of blood.

A deep horn sounded from the horizon, its tone muffled and long, carrying an ominous aura that echoed through the valleys.

Before the horn had faded, a second horn sounded, followed by a third—three horns signifying the simultaneous movement of three armies.

At the other end of the Misty Forest, golden holy light tore through the pre-dawn twilight.

The Heavenly Supreme Venerable's golden chariot emerged from the camp, eight armored celestial horses galloping towards it, bathed in holy light.

The chariot was crafted entirely from meteorite gold, its surface inscribed with divine war runes.

The Heavenly Supreme Venerable stood atop the chariot, his golden robes fluttering, a three-zhang-long golden spear in his hand, its tip crackling with blazing holy flames.

Behind him, three thousand Heavenly Supreme Palace cultivators stood in a square formation, their holy light forming a continuous expanse that dyed the entire horizon gold. Their

golden armor reflected the dawn's light, like a golden tide surging towards the Myriad Demon Ridge.

To the left, the Profound Ice Venerable's Profound Ice chariot slowly emerged from another tent.

Forged from ten-thousand-year-old profound ice, the chariot froze the air in its wake, covering the ground with a thin layer of ice.

Behind him followed five hundred Divine Abyss Pavilion disciples, each clad in ice-blue robes, their weapons radiating a chilling aura.

To the right, the Holy Light Venerable's floating divine platform rose from the third tent.

The altar is hexagonal, powered by ninety-nine Bright Stones, and floats in mid-air, emitting a soft white light.

Behind him stood eight hundred disciples of the Heavenly Saint Palace, their ranks perfectly aligned, their faces ashen.

The three armies converged on the plains north of the Misty Forest, banners obscuring the sun, swords and spears like a forest.

The combined pressure of four thousand five hundred True Immortal Realm cultivators formed a visible shockwave.

This shockwave spread outwards from the army, hurling up all the gravel and dust from the plains.

Birds took flight from the forest, only to be crushed by the oppressive killing intent before they could even spread their wings, turning into puffs of blood mist. Qingqiu glanced at him, a slight smile playing on her lips.

This young man is becoming more and more interesting.

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The Celestial Venerable stood atop the chariot, his golden robes fluttering, a three-zhang-long golden spear in his hand, its tip crackling with blazing holy flames.

Behind him, three thousand Celestial Palace cultivators stood in a square formation, their holy light forming a continuous expanse that dyed the entire horizon gold.

Their golden armor reflected the dawn's light, like a golden tide surging towards the Myriad Demon Ridge.

On the left, Venerable Xuanbing's Xuanbing chariot slowly emerged from another tent.

Forged from ten-thousand-year-old Xuanbing, the chariot froze the air in its wake, covering the ground with a thin layer of ice.

Behind him followed five hundred disciples of the Divine Abyss Pavilion, each clad in ice-blue robes, their weapons radiating a chilling aura.

On the right, Venerable Shengguang's floating altar rose from the third tent.

Hexagonal in shape, powered by ninety-nine luminous stones, it hovered in mid-air, emitting a soft white light.

Behind him were eight hundred disciples of the Heavenly Saint Palace, their ranks perfectly aligned, their faces ashen.

The three armies converged on the plain north of the Misty Forest, banners obscuring the sun, swords and spears like a forest.

The combined pressure of four thousand five hundred True Immortal Realm cultivators formed a visible shockwave.

This shockwave radiated outwards from the army, hurling away all the gravel and dust from the plain.

Birds took flight from the forest, but before they could even spread their wings, they were crushed by the oppressive killing intent, turning into puffs of blood mist. The Celestial Venerable stood atop his chariot, gazing down upon the Misty Forest.

His gaze pierced through layers of mist, landing on the majestic mountain gate deep within the forest.

The gate bore the three large characters “Ten Thousand Demon Ridge,” each three zhang in size, their strokes sharp as knives.

He snorted coldly, raising his golden spear, its tip pointing towards the gate.

“Breakthrough Pearl.”

A golden-armored cultivator behind him presented a fist-sized pearl.

The pearl was milky white, its surface covered with densely packed array-breaking runes, radiating a soft light.

This was an ancient array-breaking treasure left behind by the Divine Race, specifically designed to counter illusions and other restrictions that disturbed divine consciousness.

The Celestial Venerable tossed the Breakthrough Pearl upwards, his golden spear trembling, a beam of holy light striking the pearl.

The Breakthrough Pearl suddenly erupted with a dazzling light, like a blazing sun, illuminating the sky for dozens of miles around as bright as day.

Wherever the light reached, the mist melted away as if encountering ice and snow in a raging fire, vanishing without a trace.

Within ten breaths, the mist surrounding the Misty Forest was forced back hundreds of feet, revealing the forest's true form: ancient trees reaching for the sky, dense vines, jagged rocks, and bottomless ravines everywhere.

"Attack!" The Heavenly Venerable's voice boomed like thunder across the plain.

Three thousand Heavenly Palace cultivators shouted in unison, golden holy light coalescing into a torrent that surged towards the Misty Forest.

Their formation was wedge-shaped, with hundreds of heavily armored cultivators wielding massive shields, their shields engraved with defensive runes, forming a moving golden wall.

The center was a spear formation, the tips of which danced with holy flames, standing like a forest.

On the flanks were lightly armored cultivators wielding swords, fast and agile.

The wedge formation advanced with overwhelming force, snapping trees and cracking the ground in its wake.

Venerable Xuanbing and Venerable Shengguang each led their respective forces, slowly advancing from the flanks of the Heavenly Pole Palace.

Their pace was slow, their formation loose, clearly indicating they were prepared to retreat at any moment.

Venerable Tianji glanced back, a sinister glint in his eyes.

These two old foxes, as expected, wouldn't exert themselves easily.

But he said nothing, only gripping his golden spear tightly.

He could deal with these two old bastards after he had flattened the Myriad Demon Ridge, obtained that supreme treasure, and experienced a surge in cultivation.

The first batch of Heavenly Pole Palace cultivators to rush into the Misty Forest quickly experienced the power of the Myriad Demon Ridge.

Although the mist was forced back several hundred feet by the Barrier-Breaking Pearl, deep within the forest, the demonic fog laid down by Qingqiu remained thick and impenetrable.

It wasn't ordinary fog, but a miasma condensed from demonic energy, capable of eroding divine sense and interfering with the flow of spiritual power.

The moment the Heavenly Pole Palace's vanguard shield formation stepped into the mist's range, they felt a wave of dizziness; the scenery before them began to distort and deform, the trees seemed to move, and the ground seemed to flip.

Years of training had kept them calm, but the advance of their formation had noticeably slowed.

Just then, the first wave of attack arrived.

Dozens of poisoned crossbow bolts shot from the depths of the dense forest, their shafts a dark green, coated with the unique bone-corroding poison of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

The bolts struck the heavily armored cultivators' shields with dull thuds, the poison corroding smoking dents into the shields.

One bolt pierced through a gap in a shield, striking a cultivator in the throat; the man screamed and collapsed, his body rotting into a pool of blood within moments.

The second wave of attack followed immediately, not with crossbow bolts, but with demonic beasts.

Dozens of shadow wolves pounced from the darkest corners of the forest, their movements as agile as ghosts, their speed leaving only afterimages.

They targeted the weakest points in the formation, biting a cultivator's leg and dragging him deeper into the forest.

Screams echoed in the mist, then abruptly ceased.

Several iron-winged eagles swooped down from the treetops, their talons like hooks, tearing a cultivator's helmet and skull off with a single swipe.

Two three-zhang-tall stone demon apes leaped down from the mountainside, their massive fists slamming into the shield formation, sending several heavily armored cultivators, shields and all, flying like kites with broken strings, crashing into tree trunks, their bones shattered.

The Heavenly Pole Palace's formation began to crumble.

The vanguard shield formation was torn apart by the demonic beasts, the dense forest filled with shouts of battle, screams of agony, roars of demonic beasts, and the clash of weapons.

Blood stained the forest floor, severed limbs hung from branches, and the air reeked of blood.

But the Heavenly Pole Venerable paid no heed.

His vanguard consisted of the lowest-ranking disciples of the Heavenly Pole Palace; the number of their deaths was insignificant.

He merely watched coldly, waiting until the vanguard shield formation had established a foothold deep within the forest and repelled the demonic beast horde before brandishing his golden spear and ordering the main force to advance.

His voice was as cold as iron: "Vanguard, hold your ground! Central army, advance! Those who block your way, kill without mercy!"

The central army of the Heavenly Palace began its advance. The spear-wielding cultivators formed a dense spear array, holy light condensing into sharp blades at the spear tips.

They pushed their spear array forward, snapping ancient trees in half wherever they went, and impaling demonic beasts on the spear blades, pinning them to the trunks.

Holy light and flames spread from the spear tips, igniting the withered branches and fallen leaves in the forest, turning the entire misty forest into a sea of fire.

The demon warriors fought desperately, but the Heavenly Palace's numerical advantage was too obvious.

The three thousand-strong army was like a giant meat grinder, crushing all resistance in the forest.

The corpses of demonic beasts piled up like mountains, and the severed limbs of demons were scattered among the charred trees.

Hundreds of Shadow Wolves fell before the golden spear array, their corpses burned to charcoal by the holy light.

Dozens of Stone Demon Apes were simultaneously pierced by dozens of golden spears, their massive bodies crashing to the ground, raising clouds of ashes.

The Ironwing Eagle's corpse hung from charred branches, its wings burned away by holy light, leaving only a charred skeleton.

After suffering heavy losses, the defenders of the first layer of the barrier began an orderly retreat according to Kai's plan.

Using the dense forest as cover, they withdrew through pre-dug tunnels, detonating spiritual energy bombs buried in the woods before leaving.

The bombs exploded deep within the forest, sending dozens of pursuing Heavenly Palace vanguard soldiers flying.

The defenders of the second layer of the barrier were already on high alert.

The second wave of demonic beasts sent by Qingqiu leaped down from the mountainside, plunging into the flank of Heavenly Palace.

Hundreds of Ice Scale Pythons emerged from the ground, their bodies as thick as buckets sweeping across, engulfing dozens of cultivators and crushing them into mincemeat.

Dozens of Thunder Eagles swooped down from the clouds, lightning crackling on their beaks, each peck leaving a charred hole.

The swarm of poisonous spiders laid a dense web in the forest, the sticky webbing slowing the advance of the Heavenly Palace once again.

The casualty figures for the Heavenly Palace continued to rise.

By the time the third layer of the barrier was breached, over three hundred cultivators had perished, and more than two hundred had sustained varying degrees of injury.

Yet, the Heavenly Venerable remained unmoved. His face was expressionless, even showing signs of impatience.

He activated the Barrier-Breaking Pearl again, shattering the core array eye of the second layer of the barrier.

The backlash of spiritual energy instantly killed dozens of demon warriors guarding the second layer of the barrier; their bodies were torn to shreds by the spatial tearing force, leaving not even a complete bone behind.

“Those who block my way shall die,” the Heavenly Venerable’s voice echoed through the dense forest, cold and devoid of any emotion. At noon, three blazing suns shone brightly in the sky.

The army of the Heavenly Pole Palace finally broke through the ninth layer of restrictions and arrived at the foot of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. Of

the three thousand cultivators, nearly eight hundred had perished. The remaining two thousand two hundred remained in perfect formation, their holy light shining as they arrayed themselves in an attack formation before the mountain gate.

However, their armor was stained with blood and mud, their weapons were riddled with holes, and many had already exhausted more than half of their spiritual energy.

The repeated breakthroughs through the nine layers of restrictions had come at a heavy price. With each layer they broke through, they faced increasingly fierce resistance, and the defenders of each layer were using their lives to delay their advance.

The plaza in front of the mountain gate had been cleared, leaving an unnatural emptiness across several thousand feet of open ground.

On the mountain walls flanking the plaza, the elders of the Qingyun Sword Sect stood suspended in mid-air, each with at least a hundred flying swords hovering beside them. Thousands of flying swords formed the Ten Thousand Swords Returning to the Origin Formation, their tips pointing outwards, their cold light shimmering like an inverted galaxy, dyeing the entire sky a steely blue.

The array masters of the Wanfa Sect were distributed around the plaza, each standing on a core array eye.

All eighteen layers of superimposed restrictions were activated, layers of light curtains like inverted glass bowls, completely covering the mountain gate.

Only one person stood before the mountain gate. He wore

a long blue robe, his figure upright, like a sharp sword stuck in the center of the plaza.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword hung at his waist, its scabbard shimmering with a faint purple light.

Kai raised his head, looking at the golden chariot that was pressing down from the horizon.

The Heavenly Supreme Venerable's chariot emerged from the dense forest, the hooves of eight celestial horses leaving charred hoofprints on the stone slabs of the plaza.

The chariot stopped a hundred feet away from Kai, with the Celestial Venerable looking down at him.

His golden robes fluttered, his golden spear held horizontally, and holy light surged around him like flames.

The pressure of a peak third-grade Golden Immortal was released without reservation, causing the stone slabs on the plaza to crack.

The Profound Ice Venerable and the Holy Light Venerable also arrived with their respective troops, positioned on either side of the Celestial Palace.

The Profound Ice Venerable stood on his Profound Ice Chariot, his ice-blue robes billowing in the wind. He glanced at the formation before the mountain gate, his brow furrowing slightly, but he showed no intention of attacking.

The Holy Light Venerable sat high on his floating divine platform, his white robes motionless, the enigmatic smile still playing on his lips. His gaze lingered on Kai for a moment before shifting away.

"Kai,"

the Celestial Venerable's voice boomed like thunder across the plaza, "You destroyed my branch hall, killed my elders, and slaughtered my disciples. Today, I have come personally to settle this score."

Kai remained silent. He raised his right hand and slowly drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword.

The moment the sword was drawn, a purple chaotic fire ignited from its blade. It wasn't intense, but it caused the Heavenly Venerable, a hundred feet away, to slightly twitch at the corner of his eye.

"Those who block my way shall die."

The Heavenly Venerable stood with his spear held horizontally, holy light gathering at the spear tip into a fist-sized, blazing white sphere. Though small, the sphere contained enough power to flatten a mountain.

"These words,"

Kai finally spoke, his voice soft, his tone as indifferent as if discussing a trivial matter, "I return them to you as they were."

He moved.

Without charging, without a preparatory stance, Kai vanished from his spot, appearing atop the Heavenly Venerable's chariot in the next instant.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword descended with the simplest of slashes, its speed not fast, even slow, but along the trajectory of the falling blade, space was torn open by a dark rift.

It wasn't sword energy tearing space, but rather the inherent characteristic of chaotic power itself. All things in heaven and earth must return to their origin before chaos, and space is no exception.

A deafening spatial explosion echoed through the sky, as if even the heavens and earth trembled at the sight of that sword strike.

The Celestial Venerable's pupils constricted sharply.

He hadn't expected Kai to be so fast, nor had he anticipated the terrifying power of that sword.

He gripped the shaft of the golden spear with both hands, parrying upwards.

Holy light condensed into a semi-transparent shield on the spear. The instant the spear shaft collided with the sword's edge, the entire chariot sank with a deafening roar. The eight celestial horses simultaneously let out mournful cries, their hooves buckling to the ground, their leg bones shattering with a series of crisp cracking sounds.

The chariot's chassis, crafted from meteorite gold, was twisted and deformed by the immense force, emitting a piercing metallic groan.

A visible shockwave rippled outwards from the point of impact, sending stone slabs flying from the plaza, tumbling hundreds of feet through the air before crashing into the mountainside and shattering into dust.

The protective light screens of the Azure Cloud Sword Sect and the Myriad Laws Sect flickered violently from the shockwave. The array masters responsible for the core array eyes groaned in unison, blood trickling from the corners of their mouths.

The Celestial Venerable swayed, the recoil from the spear shaft causing the tiger's mouth of both hands to split open simultaneously, golden blood seeping from between his fingers.

A hint of shock flashed in his eyes, but more so, rage.

He roared, holy light erupting from his body, dyeing his entire body gold. "Is that all you've got?"

The golden spear swept across, a hundred-zhang-long holy light spear aura traversing the plaza.

Wherever the spear aura passed, the air ignited, and space was distorted and warped by the heat.

Dozens of Wan Yao Ling cultivators who couldn't dodge in time were grazed by the spear aura, their armor instantly melting, their flesh turning to charcoal in the holy light.

Kai didn't take the hit head-on. He twisted in mid-air, using the void as leverage to avoid the direct impact of the spear aura.

The spear aura swept past his side, blasting a hole more than ten zhang deep into the mountain wall behind him, sending debris raining down.

Chaotic fire extended from the Dragon-Slaying Sword, transforming into a purple sword aura, slashing diagonally towards the Celestial Venerable's right arm.

The trajectory of the sword energy was unpredictable and erratic; one moment it was on the left, the next on the right.

The Celestial Venerable parried with his spear, resulting in another head-on collision.

This time, neither retreated; the sword energy and spear energy clashed wildly between them, each impact unleashing blinding flashes and deafening roars.

The stone slabs of the plaza were completely shattered, the ground riddled with cracks several feet deep and charred craters.

The air was thick with the smells of ozone and sulfur—an anomaly produced when chaotic fire and holy light annihilated each other.

While the two fought fiercely, forces from all sides of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge launched a full-scale attack.

Gui Yuanzi led the Gui Yuan Sect disciples from the left, Qing Yunzi, the sect leader, led the Qing Yun Sword Sect from the right, and the array

masters of the Myriad Laws Sect activated their restrictions, cutting off the Celestial Venerable's army's retreat.

Two thousand cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge and two thousand two hundred cultivators from the Heavenly Extreme Palace clashed in the plaza, their shouts, screams, and the clash of weapons weaving together a battle hymn of blood and fire.

The roars of spirit beasts mingled with the furious shouts of cultivators, the golden light of holy light, the silvery white of sword energy, and the crimson of demonic power intertwining to create a chaotic yet magnificent spectacle on the plaza.

The disciples of the Guiyuan Sect formed the Guiyuan Grand Formation, thirty-six people per group, their spiritual energy flowing as one, like thirty-six sharp blades simultaneously piercing the Tianji Palace's formation.

Each attack was perfectly synchronized, their sword light converging into silver torrents, reaping the Tianji Palace cultivators one after another.

Guiyuanzi himself charged at the front of the formation, his longsword flashing like a dragon, each strike bringing down a Tianji Palace cultivator.

His white hair and beard were stained with the blood of his enemies, but his eyes grew ever brighter and sharper. The sword cultivators of the Qingyun Sword Sect were in their element.

Qingyunzi's Myriad Swords Returning to One Formation erupted in full force, and thousands of flying swords suspended in the air rained down like a storm, tearing the Tianji Palace's formation into pieces.

The rain of swords was so dense it was suffocating; each flying sword was imbued with the unique Qingyun Sword Qi of the Qingyun Sword Sect, incomparably sharp.

The cultivators of the Tianji Palace raised their shields to block, but the flying swords fell from all directions, leaving no way to dodge.

Wave after wave of sword rain, each more intense than the last, pierced countless holes in the Tianji Palace's defenses.

The array masters of the Wanfa Sect applied constant pressure from the outside, their enchantments tightening like an invisible giant net.

The enchantment's light curtain compressed from one direction, driving the Tianji Palace cultivators into predetermined traps.

They also continuously used spells to seal off the Tianji Palace's retreat routes, burying spiritual energy bombs and deadly traps along each one.

Several elders of the Heavenly Pole Palace, attempting to break out of the encirclement, stepped into a forbidden trap. The stone slab beneath their feet suddenly collapsed, revealing a bottomless shaft. The bottom of the shaft was lined with poisoned spikes, and screams echoed from the bottom before abruptly ceasing.

Casualties at the Heavenly Pole Palace began to rise rapidly.

Without the cover of the Misty Forest and the obstruction of the restrictions, in a direct confrontation, the two thousand cultivators of the Myriad Demon Ridge, relying on their terrain advantage and formations, were actually overwhelming the two thousand-plus cultivators of the Heavenly Pole Palace.

The Heavenly Pole Palace cultivators retreated continuously, their formation compressed smaller and smaller, forced from the plaza in front of the mountain gate all the way to the edge of the plaza, and any further retreat would plunge them into the Misty Forest.

The Heavenly Pole Venerable sensed the rout of his subordinates. He wanted to withdraw to reinforce them, but each attempt to break free from his entanglement with Kai was met with a purple sword beam that forced him back.

Although Kai's cultivation was only at the seventh rank of True Immortal, his chaotic power was too strange. Every time his sword energy collided with the holy light, a portion of the holy light was devoured by the chaotic fire. With this ebb and flow, the Heavenly Venerable's spiritual energy consumption rate far exceeded expectations.

Worse still, Gui Yuanzi, Qing Yunzi, and the Grand Elder of the Myriad Laws Sect were able to attack the Heavenly Venerable's golden-armored guards from three directions simultaneously.

Gui Yuanzi severed the right arm of one of the golden-armored guards with a single sword strike. The guard screamed and retreated, blood gushing from the severed arm like a fountain.

Qing Yunzi's flying swords pierced through another guard's armor like a torrential rain, leaving dozens of bloody holes in his body.

The Grand Elder of the Myriad Laws Sect's restrictive spell trapped a third guard in a distorted space. The guard struggled desperately within the space, his limbs twisted into pretzels by the distorted space.

Although the golden-armored guards were all peak ninth-rank True Immortals, they suffered heavy casualties under the combined attack of the three experts.

The remaining guards began to tighten their defensive line, staying close to the Heavenly Venerable's chariot, not daring to leave. The Heavenly

Venerable's face was ashen.

While parrying Kai's sword energy, he turned back and roared at the two flanks, "Palace Master Xuanbing! Palace Master Shengguang! How long are you going to stand there? Make your move now!"

The Xuanbing Venerable stood on the Xuanbing chariot, his ice-blue robes motionless.

He glanced at the battle in the square, then at the Shengguang Venerable.

The Shengguang Venerable was also looking at him, the enigmatic smile still playing on his lips.

The two stared at each other for a moment, then simultaneously turned to look at the Heavenly Venerable.

“Lord of the Heavenly Palace,”

Venerable Xuanbing’s voice was as cold as ten-thousand-year-old glacier, “didn’t we agree? You would lead the charge, and we would cooperate. You haven’t even broken in yet, and you’re already asking us to intervene? That’s not quite what we agreed

on.” Venerable Shengguang nodded, his tone as gentle as an old neighbor, “The Pavilion Master is right. Lord of the Heavenly Palace, you said you could break in. If we rashly intervene, it would be against the rules. Just hold on a little longer, and once you’ve broken in, we’ll naturally follow.”

“You…” Venerable Tianji’s eyes almost spit fire, “If I lose, none of you will escape!”

Venerable Xuanbing didn’t answer, only smiled.

That smile was cold, colder than his ten-thousand-year-old glacier.

The fighting on the plaza continued.

The Heavenly Palace’s casualties had exceeded 1,200, and the remaining less than 1,800 were compressed into a corner of the plaza, surrounded by enemies.

Guiyuanzi, Qingyunzi, and the Grand Elder of the Wanfa Sect joined forces, tearing apart the last line of defense of the Tianji Palace layer by layer.

Breaking out was impossible; the encirclement tightened, and every Tianji Palace cultivator attempting to break through would be hit by at least three different attacks simultaneously within three breaths.

Meanwhile, the Tianji Venerable himself was being relentlessly entangled by Kai.

The holy light on his golden spear had dimmed, and the tip was riddled with dents from the scorching Chaos Fire.

The power of Chaos was eroding his holy light, weakening his defenses, and depleting his spiritual energy with every exchange.

Sweat beaded on his forehead. A peak Golden Immortal of the third rank had been forced into this predicament by a mere True Immortal of the seventh rank—this was the greatest humiliation he had suffered in tens of thousands of years.

“Xuanbing! Shengguang!”

The Tianji Venerable’s voice had turned into a roar, hoarse and tinged with barely perceptible panic. “Are you really going to stand by and watch me die?!”

Xuanbing Venerable and Shengguang Venerable remained motionless.

They stood silently at the edge of the battlefield, watching the Heavenly Palace army struggle in pools of blood, watching the Heavenly Venerable being driven step by step into a desperate situation by Kai’s Chaos Fire.

Their faces were expressionless, but their eyes gleamed with the same calculating light—the light of calculation, the patience of waiting for an opportunity, the ruthlessness of the mantis stalking the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind.

The Heavenly Venerable finally understood.

These two old foxes had never intended to help him from the beginning.

They were waiting for him to die.

Once he was dead, the Heavenly Palace's territory, resources, cultivation techniques, and the supreme treasure he had coveted on Ten Thousand Demon Ridge would all become theirs.

But he understood too late.

The Heavenly Venerable stood on the shattered chariot, his golden robe scorched with dozens of blackened holes by the Chaos Fire, revealing equally tattered golden armor beneath.

His hands were split open, golden blood dripping down the shaft of his spear, hissing and burning on the cracked stone slabs.

All eight celestial horses were dead. Some had their internal organs shattered by the shockwave, others were reduced to ashes by the chaotic fire. The last celestial horse's carcass hung halfway from the broken chariot shaft, its eyes wide open, its death unfulfilled.

Behind it, the Heavenly Palace's formation had been compressed to a mere three hundred feet.

Of the two thousand two hundred cultivators, more than half had perished under the three-sided attack from Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. Less than a thousand remained, huddled back to back, their shields shattered, their spears broken, their spiritual energy nearly depleted.

Their armor was smeared with blood and mud, indistinguishable as to whether it was their own or that of their comrades.

The plaza was littered with their corpses. Some had been shredded to pieces by the Guiyuan Sect's sword formation, others pinned to the ground by the Qingyun Sword Sect's flying swords, and still others charred to a crisp by the Wanfa Sect's restrictions.

Blood trickled through the cracks in the stone slabs, eventually pooling in the low-lying areas of the plaza to form a thick, deep red pool of blood.

Dozens of severely wounded cultivators struggled in the pool, reaching out for help, but no one could pull them out. A disciple of the Heavenly Pole Palace, dragging his legs severed by a flying sword, crawled laboriously toward his companions, his fingertips grinding bone into the stone slabs.

Before he reached halfway, an arrow, seemingly from nowhere, pierced the back of his neck. His body twitched twice, then lay still.

But the Heavenly Pole Palace had not yet collapsed.

Those who had survived were the most elite disciples of the Heavenly Pole Palace, each a high-level True Immortal cultivator forged in blood and fire.

Though their eyes were filled with fear, fear did not crush their fighting spirit.

Because they knew that the Heavenly Pole Venerable was still alive, and the Palace Master was still fighting.

As long as the Palace Master was alive, the Heavenly Pole Palace had not been defeated.

The Heavenly Pole Venerable surveyed his surroundings, seeing the plaza strewn with corpses, the remnants of the formation compressed to their limits, and the ironclad defensive line of the Myriad Demon Ridge encircling them on three sides.

Every breath, someone fell; every breath, the encirclement shrank.

He then looked at the flanks; the Profound Ice Venerable's Profound Ice Chariot remained motionless, and the Holy Light Venerable's floating divine platform still hovered in mid-air.

The two watched silently as his disciples were slaughtered and his chariot was shattered.

Their eyes held no pity, no hesitation, only cold calculation.

The Xuanbing Venerable even picked up a cup of spiritual tea and slowly sipped it.

The teacup was carved from ten-thousand-year-old Xuanbing ice, its surface adorned with fine water droplets that shimmered in the sunlight.

Each droplet was like a tiny eye, reflecting the carnage in the square, and reflecting his indifference.

“Xuanbing…Holy Light…” The Tianji Venerable’s teeth clenched so tightly he suddenly threw his head back and laughed, his laughter filled with madness and despair. “Good! Very good! You want me dead? I won’t die! I’ll make sure none of you escape unscathed!”

He bit his tongue, spitting out a mouthful of golden blood.

The blood mist turned, staining his golden spear a dark gold from end to end.

The golden spear trembled violently, emitting a sharp buzzing sound. The war runes on its shaft, stimulated by the essence blood, were fully activated, radiating a light more intense than the sun.

His eyes turned bloodshot, and golden veins surfaced beneath his skin. The blood within these veins, like boiling magma, seeped through his skin, making his face resemble that of an angry Vajra.

“Disciples of the Heavenly Pole Palace, heed my command!”

His voice was hoarse and frenzied, yet it exploded in everyone’s ears like muffled thunder. “Today, it’s a fight to the death! I will stand with you! Killing one is enough, killing two is a bonus! Let these demon scum know that disciples of the Heavenly Pole Palace die standing, not kneeling in life!”

Before his words were finished, his oppressive aura suddenly surged.

Burning his essence blood forcibly pushed his cultivation from the peak of the third rank of Golden Immortal to the fourth rank. Although it was only a temporary boost, the violent holy light, like a falling sun, enveloped the entire plaza.

The stone slabs on the plaza cracked into a spiderweb pattern under this oppressive aura, the cracks extending hundreds of feet away.

All cultivators below the ninth rank of True Immortal felt difficulty breathing; those with lower cultivation levels immediately knelt, blood seeping from their ears and noses.

“Burning his essence blood?” Gui Yuanzi’s expression changed drastically. “The Heavenly Extreme Venerable has gone mad! With his essence blood completely burned away, his cultivation will drop a whole major realm!”

“He doesn’t intend to return alive,” Qing Yunzi said in a deep voice, his swordplay continuing, but his expression had become extremely grave. “He wants to perish with us.”

The remnants of the Heavenly Extreme Palace had found their last foothold in this desperate situation. With

their Palace Master burning his essence blood to fight the enemy, what reason did they have to retreat?

Fear was swallowed by despair, and despair was replaced by madness.

Led by the Heavenly Extreme Venerable, who was burning his essence blood, they launched a suicidal counterattack against the defenses of the Myriad Demon Ridge.

The Heavenly Extreme Venerable himself led the charge.

His golden spear swept across, and a spear aura several times thicker than before slammed into the Gui Yuan Sect’s sword formation.

Thirty-six disciples of the Guiyuan Sect within the sword formation simultaneously coughed up blood. Twelve were blasted away, crashing into the mountainside behind them, the sound of bones shattering like popping beans.

Guiyuanzi parried with his sword; the moment his longsword clashed with the spear's energy, a piercing cracking sound emanated from the blade. He was thrown back dozens of feet, his feet carving two deep furrows into the stone slabs.

His sword-wielding arm was numb, and his tiger's mouth was split open, blood dripping down the hilt.

The remnants of the Tianji Palace followed closely behind, like a pack of wounded beasts, launching wave after wave of attacks on the Wan Yao Ridge's defenses.

They no longer defended, no longer formed ranks, no longer conserved their spiritual power; each person compressed their last bit of holy light into a fist-sized light bullet, blasting it towards the Wan Yao Ridge's lines in a suicidal manner.

Though small, the light bullet was an attack from a True Immortal Realm cultivator who had concentrated their life's cultivation, its power terrifying.

The Qingyun Sword Sect's sword formation bore the brunt of the first wave of impact.

Dozens of holy light bombs exploded within the sword formation, each shattering several flying swords into fragments and leaving several sword cultivators mangled beyond recognition.

Fragments of flying swords rained down, piercing the armor and bodies of cultivators who couldn't dodge in time.

An elder who had followed Qingyunzi for three thousand years was struck by a holy light bomb, his entire body exploding from the inside

out. Golden holy fire incinerated his flesh and soul, leaving only a broken sword clattering to the ground, its blade still engraved with the elder's name.

The eighteen layers of superimposed restrictions of the Myriad Laws Sect also cracked under the continuous impact.

Several array masters responsible for the core array eyes coughed up blood from the backlash. One elderly array master with gray hair collapsed backward, eyes wide open, lifeless.

His hands remained in the hand seals, his finger bones shattered by the backlash.

The casualty figures at Ten Thousand Demon Ridge began to rise.

A vice sect leader of the Guiyuan Sect was severed at the waist by the Heavenly Venerable's spear energy, his upper body flying through the air while still swinging his sword.

Seven core disciples of the Qingyun Sword Sect were obliterated in the bombardment of the Holy Light Bomb, leaving only seven charred craters where they had stood.

Three array masters of the Wanfa Sect had their meridians shattered by the backlash and died instantly.

The fighting in the square became even more brutal, more bloody, and more unlike a battle in the human world.

People fell every moment, and screams echoed every moment.

Blood soaked every inch of the square's stone slabs, and severed limbs were scattered in every corner.

The stench of blood in the air was so strong it was nauseating.

A young Guiyuan Sect disciple was thrown into the air by the explosion, only to find his left arm missing when he landed, the severed flesh a bloody mess, revealing white bone fragments.

He didn't cry out, but gritted his teeth, picked up his fallen sword with his right hand, and charged forward again. Kai hovered in mid-air, his purple eyes sweeping across the battlefield.

His divine sense covered the entire plaza; every fallen person, every torn defensive line, every desperate counterattack by the Heavenly Palace was clearly presented in his perception.

The Heavenly Venerable had gone completely mad after burning his essence blood.

Every swing of his golden spear was relentless, every move a suicidal attack.

He didn't defend, didn't block, didn't dodge. Kai's sword energy slashed at him, leaving deep, bone-revealing wounds, but he didn't care, letting golden blood spray in the air, his golden spear thrusting back with even more ferocity.

Kai could handle this style of fighting.

The power of chaos countered the holy light. Although his cultivation was inferior to the Heavenly Venerable's, if this dragged on, the Heavenly Venerable would surely die.

Burning one's essence blood comes at a price. He could clearly sense that the essence blood within the Heavenly Venerable's body was rapidly depleting. At most, the Heavenly Venerable could only hold on for another half an hour. Without his intervention, the Heavenly Venerable would exhaust his essence blood, suffer a drop in cultivation, and even die on the spot.

But the question was, could he wait half an hour?

Although the defenses of the Myriad Demon Ridge had not yet been breached, the casualties were already considerable.

The Guiyuan Sect's sword formation had been breached twice, and both times Guiyuanzi personally led his men to repel it, but each time it came at the cost of lives.

The Qingyun Sword Sect's Myriad Swords Returning to the Sect Formation was being gradually consumed by the Holy Light Bombs. The number of flying swords suspended in the air had decreased from several thousand to just over a thousand, and each falling sword meant the fall of a sword cultivator.

The restrictions of the Myriad Laws Sect had already developed seven or eight cracks. Although the formation masters were desperately trying to repair them, the repair speed could not keep up with the rate of destruction.

More importantly, the Xuanbing Venerable and the Holy Light Venerable were still watching.

The two old foxes had not made a move from beginning to end, but their armies were waiting outside the mountain gate.

Thirteen hundred fresh troops, brimming with spiritual energy, maintained their formation intact, without a single loss.

Once the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge and the Heavenly Pole Palace were both severely weakened, they would pounce without hesitation and devour both sides.

Kai could kill the Heavenly Pole Venerable.

But after he killed the Heavenly Pole Venerable, how much fighting power would the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge have left?

Could those people withstand the combined attack of Xuanbing and Holy Light?

The answer was self-evident.

Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword, his figure flashing as he withdrew from the entanglement with the Heavenly Pole Venerable.

He hovered in the air, chaotic power flowing around him, his purple eyes calm as two deep pools.

He transmitted his voice to Qingqiu.

“Your Majesty, leave a way out for the Heavenly Pole Palace.”

Qingqiu stood on the mountain gate wall, dressed in snow-white robes, manipulating the nine layers of restrictions on the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

Hearing Kai’s voice transmission, her movements paused for a moment. “What did you say?”

“The Celestial Venerable has gone mad from burning his life essence. If we continue fighting, the Celestial Palace will be completely wiped out, but the Myriad Demon Ridge will also suffer heavy casualties.”

Kai’s voice remained calm, as if stating an indisputable fact. “The Divine Abyss Pavilion and the Heavenly Saint Palace are still waiting. If the Celestial Palace is wiped out and the Myriad Demon Ridge is crippled, they can reap the benefits. We cannot afford it.”

Qingqiu was silent for two breaths.

She knew Kai was right.

The Guiyuan Sect had already suffered more than two hundred casualties, the Qingyun Sword Sect had lost more than one hundred flying swords and more than seventy sword cultivators, and the Wanfa Sect’s array masters had died more than a dozen.

This price was already high enough for a two-thousand-strong allied army.

If the fighting continued, the price would only be higher. And the combined forces of the Xuanbing Venerable and the Holy Light Venerable were the real threat.

“You want to release a tiger back into the mountains?”

“The Heavenly Venerable’s essence blood has already burned more than half of its power. After this battle, his cultivation will inevitably plummet, and it will take at least several hundred years to recover.”

“A crippled Heavenly Venerable is more useful than a dead one. If he lives, Xuanbing and Shengguang won’t dare to attack us with impunity. If he dies, the Heavenly Palace’s territory and resources will all fall into the hands of those two old foxes.”

Qingqiu was silent for a moment, then chuckled softly, “You’re more calculating than I thought. Fine, give him a way out.”

She raised her hand and cast a spell.

A crack quietly appeared in the barrier on the left side of the plaza. The crack wasn’t large, only ten zhang wide, but it was enough for the people from the Heavenly Palace to rush out.

Outside the crack was the depths of the Misty Forest, beyond which lay the wasteland, and at the end of the wasteland was the direction of the Heavenly Palace.

The Heavenly Venerable was frantically chasing Kai when he suddenly sensed the change in the barrier.

He turned around sharply and saw the crack, and a faint escape route in the Misty Forest.

He froze for a moment.

Then he understood.

Kai wasn't trying to kill him; he was letting him go.

This feeling infuriated him even more than being defeated by Kai head-on.

He, the dignified Lord of the Heavenly Extreme Palace, a Golden Immortal, a regional overlord of the seventeenth heaven, actually needed an enemy to grant him a way out?

His pride burned fiercely, more intensely than his lifeblood.

He almost wanted to recklessly charge forward, to perish together with Kai, to tear this purple-eyed youth to shreds with his last strength.

But then he heard the voices of his disciples behind him.

"Lord! There's a way out!"

"Lord! Run!"

"Lord, your disciples will cover the retreat! You must retreat!"

The Heavenly Extreme Venerable turned to look behind him.

His old subordinates who had followed him for ten thousand years, the disciples he had personally taught, were now using their last spiritual energy to create a fragile defensive line.

Their eyes were filled with pleading, not for their own lives, but for their Lord to live.

An elder who had followed him the longest was pierced through the abdomen by a flying sword, his intestines dragging on the ground, yet he still used his sword to support his body, shouting to him, "Palace Master, run!"

His life essence was still burning, but his reason finally prevailed over his madness.

He couldn't let the entire Heavenly Palace perish here today.

He gritted his teeth and hoarsely roared out a single word: "Retreat!"

The remnants of the Heavenly Palace surged out from the cracks in the barrier like a burst dam, rushing towards the Misty Forest.

The cultivators of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge did not pursue; this was Qingqiu's order.

They stood on the defensive line, watching those blood-soaked enemies run further and further into the forest, until the last glimmer of gold disappeared into the depths of the dense woods.

The Heavenly Venerable was the last to leave. He stood at the edge of the crack in the barrier, glancing back at Kai.

Those blood-red eyes were filled with complex emotions: anger, resentment, humiliation, but more than anything, something indescribable.

He didn't speak, and neither did Kai.

The two stared at each other for a moment, a hundred feet apart, before the Celestial Venerable turned and vanished into the Misty Forest.

The last Celestial Palace cultivator ran out of the plaza, and the crack in the barrier slowly closed.

When the remnants of the Celestial Palace rushed out of the Misty Forest, less than eight hundred remained.

The three thousand-strong army had come in a mighty wave, but now only a quarter of them remained, dragging their wounded bodies as they staggered across the wasteland.

Every one of them was wounded; some had shattered armor, others had lost limbs.

Their holy light was dimmed to the point of being almost invisible, most of their weapons were lost, and even the Celestial Palace's holy light banner had been lost in the escape.

Some supported their fallen comrades, some used broken spears as crutches, and some coughed up blood as they walked.

Golden fragments of armor were scattered along the way, like a broken golden tear.

The Celestial Venerable walked at the very front.

His golden robe was completely burned away, revealing his scarred chest.

The aftereffects of burning his essence blood were beginning to show; half of his hair had turned white, several deep wrinkles had appeared on his face, and his steps were no longer as steady as a mountain.

With each step, sporadic bursts of holy light escaped from his wounds, a sign of excessive burning of his essence blood and unstable cultivation.

An hour ago, he was still a majestic peak Golden Immortal of the third rank; now his cultivation had plummeted to the second rank of Golden Immortal, and was still declining.

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The armies of Venerable Xuanbing and Venerable Shengguang remained encamped.

Their tents were neat and clean, their disciples' armor gleamed, their weapons sharp, and their spiritual energy abundant.

From dawn until now, they hadn't fired a single arrow or drawn a single sword, silently watching the Heavenly Palace's army be gradually worn down and destroyed.

Now, seeing Venerable Tianji leading his defeated troops out of the Misty Forest in a disheveled state, Venerable Xuanbing and Venerable Shengguang simultaneously smiled.

Venerable Xuanbing, riding his Xuanbing chariot, went to meet them, his ice-blue robes fluttering in the wind, a feigned expression of concern on his face.

"Heavenly Palace Master, are you alright? Why did you come out so quickly? We were just about to lend a hand."

His voice carried undisguised mockery, like a cat toying with a wounded mouse.

Venerable Tianji slowly raised his head, his blood-red eyes fixed on Venerable Xuanbing.

His fists clenched so tightly they cracked, his nails digging into his palms—not anger, but humiliation.

"Xuanbing."

His voice was hoarse, like sandpaper grinding iron. "How dare you say such a thing? I risked my life at the front, and twelve hundred disciples of the Heavenly Pole Palace died, and you didn't fire a single arrow or offer a single sword strike, just stood by and watched! Now you tell me you're prepared to lend a hand?"

Venerable Holy Light floated down from the floating platform, his white robes as white as snow, his smile as warm as spring.

His smile was as gentle as an old neighbor trying to mediate a fight. "Heavenly Pole Palace Master, you're wrong about that. It was agreed

that you would lead the charge. You couldn't break through yourself, and now you blame us for not helping?

Besides, we were assessing the situation. Look, when you withdrew, the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge didn't pursue you, did they? That means they were exhausted too. Wouldn't it be twice as effective if we intervened now?"

Venerable Heavenly Pole almost spat out blood.

His chest heaved violently, his wounds burst open with anger, and golden blood flowed down his chest, staining the sand beneath his feet a dark gold.

"Assess the situation? Achieve twice the result with half the effort?" His voice was already incoherent. "Xuanbing, Shengguang, you wait. The shame I suffer today, I will avenge in the future..."

"The future?"

Venerable Xuanbing laughed, a cold laugh. "Palace Master of Tianji, you should go back and heal your injuries first. In your current state, it's hard to say whether you can live to see 'the future.

' The aftereffects of burning your essence blood are not so pleasant."

He paused, his voice becoming even more sarcastic. "Don't worry, we'll handle the matter of Wanyao Ridge for you."

Venerable Tianji didn't speak again.

He glanced at the two of them one last time, his gaze filled with a desire to pounce on them and tear them to pieces, but he ultimately didn't move. He couldn't move; he couldn't turn against Shenyuan Pavilion and Tiansheng Palace here.

Tianji Palace only had eight hundred remaining soldiers, and his own cultivation had fallen to the second rank of Golden Immortal, while the two families combined still had thirteen hundred elite troops.

No matter how unwilling he was, he could only endure it.

He turned around and led the remaining soldiers of Tianji Palace into the depths of the wasteland.

His back was hunched, his steps faltering, a trail of golden blood etched behind him, starkly contrasting against the gray sands of the wasteland.

Eight hundred remaining soldiers followed him, silent except for the clatter of footsteps and intermittent coughs.

Occasionally, someone would fall, never to rise again; his companions would simply quicken their pace in silence, not daring to look back.

Venerable Xuanbing watched the remnants of the Heavenly Palace disappear at the edge of the wasteland, his smile vanishing.

He turned and met Venerable Shengguang's gaze.

"Now," Venerable Xuanbing said, his voice as cold as ancient ice, "it's our turn."

Venerable Shengguang nodded, a smile still playing on his lips, but it was no longer gentle; it was the smile of a hunter eyeing its prey.

"The Heavenly Palace has exhausted most of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge's fighting force for us, and they themselves are almost depleted. Although Kai is powerful, he can't fight against so many opponents. In addition, that woman from Qingqiu has also expended a lot of energy; I sensed that her aura is much weaker than before the battle."

He paused, "However, that kid Kai is a bit strange. Pavilion Master Xuanbing, what do you think?"

“What do I think?” Venerable Xuanbing smiled, “No matter how strange he is, I don’t think he can stop our two families from joining forces. Let’s try diplomacy first, then force.”

The two gave the order simultaneously.

1,300 elite cultivators from the Divine Abyss Pavilion and the Heavenly Saint Palace began to form ranks.

The ice-blue robes and white armor were distinct yet coordinated perfectly, forming a line hundreds of feet long on the wasteland.

The disciples of the Divine Abyss Pavilion were in front, their icy power forming a continuous sheet that froze the sand on the ground into solid ice, causing the temperature in the air to plummet. The disciples of the Heavenly

Saint Palace were behind, their holy light power converging into several pillars of light, within which faint angelic phantoms danced.

Banners fluttered, swords and spears stood like a forest, and ice crystals and holy light intertwined, forming an encirclement even more tight and ruthless than that of the Heavenly Palace.

Venerable Xuanbing urged his Xuanbing chariot forward, arriving before the gates of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge in mere breaths.

Venerable Shengguang’s floating platform followed closely behind, its ninety-nine luminous stones lighting up simultaneously, illuminating the plaza before the gates with crystal clarity.

The white light shone on the corpses and pools of blood scattered across the ground, making the twisted faces and broken limbs appear exceptionally gruesome.

“Kai,”

Venerable Xuanbing's voice wasn't loud, but it carried clearly throughout the entire Ten Thousand Demon Ridge gates, "You have some skill. That fool, Venerable Tianji, deserved to fall into your hands. But don't be too happy yet."

He paused, his gaze sweeping over the defensive line before the gates. The Guiyuan Sect's sword formation was incomplete, the Qingyun Sword Sect's flying swords were more than half broken, and the Wanfa Sect's restrictions were cracked everywhere.

The cultivators of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge were still standing, but they were exhausted, many bearing wounds and having depleted most of their spiritual energy.

"Look at those behind you. They've been fighting all day, more than half dead or wounded, their spiritual energy completely depleted. How much strength do they have left? How many more waves of attack can they withstand?"

The Xuanbing Venerable's voice was unhurried, as if calculating an account. "Behind me are thirteen hundred elite troops, not a single arrow fired, not a single sword drawn. They're more than enough to deal with your remnants."

Kai stood before the mountain gate, his blue robe stained with blood, some from enemies, some from himself.

Having clashed head-on with the Heavenly Extreme Venerable for dozens of rounds, his spiritual energy was considerably depleted, but he still stood straight, his figure as upright as a javelin.

"What do you want to say?" Kai's voice was calm.

"I'll give you three choices,"

Venerable Xuanbing said, holding up three fingers. "First, take your people and leave the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, leaving behind all its territory and resources.

Second, hand over the treasure within you. I know what it is—a Daoist inheritance token, isn't it? Hand it over, and I might spare your lives."

Third, if you don't agree, then this sect leader will have no choice but to storm in. At that time, not a single soul will be spared in Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

A brief silence fell over the plaza.

The cultivators of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge gripped their weapons tightly, their eyes filled with vigilance.

Gui Yuanzi straightened his body, Qing Yunzi tightened his grip on his sword hilt, and the Grand Elder of the Myriad Laws Sect silently activated the last few layers of runes that bound the restrictions.

Kai did not answer.

He raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword, and the purple chaotic fire on its blade reignited.

The flames were small, yet they formed a purple defensive line before the mountain gate.

The flames reflected in his purple eyes, dyeing them a deep purple.

He answered Venerable Xuanbing with his actions: if you want Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, you must first cross his sword. Just as Kai was about to make his move, a white figure walked out from inside the mountain gate.

Jiang Xuelan.

She wore spirit armor, its silver plates shimmering softly in the holy light.

She wore no helmet, her black hair cascading down, simply tied back with a silver hairpin, her expression calm yet resolute.

Her white dress fluttered in the wind, her steps unhurried yet exceptionally steady, a silver-white longsword in her hand.

She walked directly to Kai, turned to face Venerable Xuanbing.

Then she made a gesture no one expected: she bowed slightly, clasped her hands in a fist salute, performing an ancient greeting.

It wasn't the greeting of Wan Yao Ling, nor of Guiyuan Sect, but of something far more ancient and timeless.

"Senior,"

her voice was soft, yet clearly heard by everyone, "This junior is Jiang Xuelan, the seventy-second generation successor of the Ice God lineage, greetings, Senior."

Venerable Xuanbing's fingers paused.

He was about to urge the Xuanbing chariot into a charge when he heard the words "Ice God lineage," and his movements abruptly stopped.

The ice-blue robe froze in the wind, its fluttering hem suspended in mid-air as if frozen.

He narrowed his eyes, scrutinizing Jiang Xuelan.

His gaze fell on the silver longsword in her hand, then on the spirit armor she wore. On the shoulder armor of the spirit armor was an extremely subtle rune, so faint it was almost invisible under the holy light, but Venerable Xuanbing recognized it—the clan crest of the Ice God lineage.

"The Ice God lineage?"

Venerable Xuanbing's voice trembled slightly. "You're from the Ice God lineage? How is that possible? The Ice God lineage was already..."

“Almost extinct,”

Jiang Xuelan interrupted, her voice calm, but a hint of sorrow hidden in her eyes. “We lived in anonymity, hiding in the spiritually barren lower realms, barely surviving for tens of thousands of years. Senior should know the Ice God lineage’s status among the gods. We were ostracized, suppressed, and driven away by other branches, ultimately forced to lower our cultivation and flee to the lower realms.”

Venerable Xuanbing remained silent for a long time.

A long, icy blue robe fluttered gently in the wind, and some of the frost covering the chariot slowly receded.

A complex expression flashed across his face, the look of someone having touched a long-sealed memory.

“You…are you truly from the Ice God lineage?”

His voice was much softer than before, no longer carrying that condescending coldness. “Show this master your bloodline mark.”

Jiang Xuelan raised her left hand, rolling up her sleeve to her elbow.

On the inside of her wrist was an icy blue mark, small, only the size of a fingernail, shaped like a hexagonal snowflake.

In the center of the snowflake was an extremely thin vertical line, like a sword, or perhaps an icicle.

She infused the mark with spiritual power, and it suddenly lit up, emitting an extremely pure, icy aura.

The aura wasn’t cold and sinister, but rather a solemn, ancient, icy power belonging to the orthodox branch of the divine race.

The Xuanbing Venerable’s pupils contracted slightly.

He remained silent for a moment, then also raised his left hand, rolling up his sleeve to his elbow.

On the inside of his wrist was a similar icy blue snowflake mark.

Two icy auras converged before the mountain gate, the air temperature plummeted, and moisture condensed into countless tiny ice crystals, shimmering with iridescent light in the sunlight.

The bloodlines of the Ice God lineage resonated upon sensing their kind; the marks on their wrists lit up simultaneously, echoing each other in an ancient way.

That echo contained tens of thousands of years and countless generations of inheritance. The Xuanbing Venerable's brows relaxed slightly, a fleeting, inscrutable emotion flashing in his eyes.

"The Ice God lineage still has descendants,"

he said softly, as if speaking to himself. "I thought that apart from myself and a few old fogies, the Ice God lineage was extinct."

The Holy Light Venerable frowned beside him. "Pavilion Master Xuanbing, this is not the time for reminiscing. A young girl from the Ice God lineage—you wouldn't back down just because of a few words from her, would you?"

His voice remained gentle, but a subtle chill had crept into his tone.

The Xuanbing Venerable ignored him.

He looked at Jiang Xuelan and asked, "Why are you here? Why are you mingling with these demons and humans? You are a descendant of the Ice God lineage, a legitimate branch of the God Clan. How can you debase yourself and associate with these ants from the lower realm?"

Jiang Xuelan shook her head.

Her voice remained calm, but it held a hint of strength. “Senior, you say legitimate branch of the God Clan? Then this junior dares to ask, when have the other branches of the God Clan ever given the Ice God lineage a second glance?”

Venerable Xuanbing’s expression stiffened for a moment.

“The Ice God lineage has been the weakest since ancient times. We’ve never had a voice in the council of the God Alliance. We’re always the last in the allocation of God resources.

We’re excluded from the inheritance of God techniques. When the Ice God lineage was wiped out tens of thousands of years ago, where were the other branches of the God race?

They watched us being killed, watched us being driven out of the God race, and not a single one offered a helping hand.”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice was neither humble nor arrogant. “Senior, you are now the Pavilion Master of the Divine Abyss Pavilion, wielding great power, but ask yourself, does the God race truly consider you one of their own?”

Venerable Xuanbing remained silent.

“The other lineages of the Divine Race occupy the best spiritual veins, the best resources, and the best inheritances.”

Jiang Xuelan glanced at Venerable Saint Light, then looked back at Venerable Profound Ice. “What does the Ice God lineage have? The Divine Abyss Pavilion? You conquered the territory of the Divine Abyss Pavilion yourself, it wasn’t given to you by the Divine Race. Whether it’s the Heavenly Pole Palace or the Heavenly Saint Palace, which of them has ever given you a second glance? If it weren’t for the attack on Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, none of them would have paid you any attention.” Her

voice wasn't loud, but every word pierced Venerable Profound Ice's heart like an ice spike.

Venerable Profound Ice's expression grew increasingly grim, his fingers lightly stroking his cane, his ice-blue robe fluttering without wind.

Venerable Saint Light sensed something was wrong.

He stepped forward, his voice still gentle, but with a clear warning in his tone: "Sect Master, don't be swayed by a little girl's words. It's not even certain if she's from the Ice God lineage. Even if she is, she's betrayed the gods and allied with the demon race; she deserves to die. You don't need to sacrifice yourself for a traitor…"

"Shut up." The Xuanbing Venerable's voice was soft, yet it frosted the air within dozens of feet.

The Holy Light Venerable's smile froze. He narrowed his eyes at the Xuanbing Venerable, saying nothing more.

Silence lasted for dozens of breaths.

The wind before the mountain gate stopped. The pervasive stench of blood seemed to freeze in that instant.

The cultivators of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge gripped their weapons tightly, unsure what would happen next.

Gui Yuanzi's palms were sweaty, Qing Yunzi's flying sword hovered behind him, spinning silently, and the array masters of the Myriad Laws Sect had already placed their fingers on the final restrictive runes.

Xuanbing Venerable looked at Jiang Xuelan, countless emotions flashing in his eyes: nostalgia, anger, sorrow, resentment, and a barely perceptible wavering.

He had lived for tens of thousands of years. He was powerless when the Ice God lineage was destroyed, he endured the ostracism of the gods, and

after conquering the Divine Abyss Pavilion, he desperately climbed the ranks, wanting to prove that the Ice God lineage was no less than any other branch.

And this little girl, this descendant of the Ice God lineage who had crawled up from the lower realm, spoke words that struck at his deepest pain.

“Senior,”

Jiang Xuelan spoke again, her voice much gentler, “the Ice God lineage is nearly extinct. If you attack Ten Thousand Demon Ridge today, regardless of victory or defeat, the Divine Abyss Pavilion will suffer a devastating blow. Our Ice God lineage can no longer afford further losses.”

She paused, her gaze fixed on Venerable Xuanbing. “Senior, please do not attack Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. This is my request to you as the seventy-second generation successor of the Ice God lineage.”

Silence fell over the plaza once more.

Venerable Holy Light’s expression gradually darkened.

He turned to look at Venerable Xuanbing, the gentleness in his eyes completely gone.

Venerable Xuanbing still remained silent.

He was still hesitant. Taking Ten Thousand Demon Ridge this time would bring abundant resources, strengthen the Divine Abyss Pavilion, and make the Ice God lineage even more prosperous.

But…

“Xuanbing brat, are you hesitating about your mother?”

Suddenly, an aged voice drifted in from nowhere.

Hearing this voice, Venerable Xuanbing was startled, his eyes filled with surprise.

“Ancestor? Ancestor, that’s your voice! Where are you?”

Venerable Xuanbing exclaimed excitedly.

Jiang Xuelan immediately recognized it as the voice of Bei Mingyuan, the ancestor of the Ice God lineage within Kai’s sea of consciousness.

“Senior, our Ice God lineage’s ancestor is now only a wisp of remnant soul, surviving in Kai’s sea of consciousness, waiting for an opportunity to reshape his physical body,”

Jiang Xuelan said to Venerable Xuanbing.

“What?” Venerable Xuanbing stared intently at Kai, his face filled with disbelief. “How is this possible? How could the ancestor’s remnant soul be in Kai’s sea of consciousness?”

“We accidentally discovered a passage to the ancient battlefield in the Fourteenth Heaven, so we entered the ancient battlefield and encountered the ancestor’s remnant soul.” ”

Kai’s sea of consciousness is vast, and he also possesses the Great Luo Golden Scripture, which is why the ancestor’s remnant soul can survive within it,”

Jiang Xuelan explained.

She didn’t dare say that Bei Mingyuan had tried to possess Kai, but his remnant soul had been suppressed by the Great Luo Golden Scripture as soon as it entered Kai’s sea of consciousness, and was now obediently staying there.

“I don’t believe it…” Venerable Xuanbing shook her head, completely disbelieving.

This was simply too outrageous. How could the ancestor of the Ice God lineage, who had disappeared for countless millennia, suddenly appear in the sea of consciousness of a mere True Immortal?

“You bastard, you can’t even recognize my voice? You still dare not believe me?”

This time, Bei Mingyuan’s voice truly came from within Kai’s body.

The voice wasn’t loud, even somewhat weak, yet it carried a bone-deep age and majesty, like a wisp of cold air seeping from the deepest part of a ten-thousand-year-old ice layer.

The voice echoed above the plaza, and everyone who heard it involuntarily shivered.

It wasn’t because the temperature had actually dropped, but because of the ancient and extreme aura contained within the voice, causing their souls to tremble instinctively.

Venerable Xuanbing froze on the chariot.

His fingers froze in mid-air, the fingertips still holding the position they had just hesitated in.

The ice-blue robes no longer fluttered, and the frost covering the chariot silently thickened.

He had lived for tens of thousands of years, crawling out of the sea of blood from the destruction of the Ice God lineage, building the foundation of the Divine Abyss Pavilion amidst the ostracism and cold stares of the gods. He thought he would never lose his composure again.

But at this moment, his eyes trembled slightly.

That voice.

That voice he thought he would never hear again.

“Ancestor… Ancestor?”

His voice was hoarse, so hoarse it was almost distorted, as if he hadn’t used that title for tens of thousands of years. “Is it really you? You’re still alive? You… you weren’t in the ancient war…”

“Nonsense.”

Bei Mingyuan’s voice came from within Kai, carrying a hint of impatience, a hint of weakness, and a hint of the satisfaction of finally being able to speak again after being questioned by a junior for tens of thousands of years. “If I were dead, would I still be talking to you here? Do you think you’re hearing a ghost?”

The Xuanbing Venerable’s hand trembled.

His ice-blue robe fluttered without wind, the frost on its hem rustling softly.

He opened his mouth, as if to say something, but before he could utter a word, Bei Mingyuan’s curses returned.

“Xuanbing brat, you bastard!”

The aged voice suddenly rose a few decibels, weak yet full of vigor. “How did I teach you back then? The Ice God lineage is unyielding, never surrendering! And you, you’ve come to attack my benefactor with those two bastards from the Heavenly Extreme Palace and the Heavenly Saint Palace? Have you grown wings? Or have you lost your mind?”

Xuanbing Venerable’s lips trembled slightly. “Ancestor… I… I don’t know…”

“Don’t know?”

Bei Mingyuan sneered, his sneer carrying the vicissitudes of tens of thousands of years. “Of course you don’t know. If you knew that my remnant soul was in this brat’s sea of consciousness, being nourished by

his Great Luo Golden Scripture, would you still dare to come? I ask you, how many people are left in the Ice God lineage? How many are left?”

Xuanbing Venerable was silent for a moment. “I… I don’t know.”

Xuanbing Venerable truly didn’t know; he didn’t know if there were any more members of the Ice God lineage in the Seventeenth Heaven Upper Realm.

However, it’s highly unlikely that they’re gone. After all, the higher you go, the closer you are to the main altar of the gods. Back then, the Ice God lineage fled the main altar, all heading down to the lower realms, even lowering their cultivation levels. It’s unlikely that anyone would risk staying in the upper realms.

He also took a great risk when he fled to the seventeenth heaven and founded the Divine Abyss Pavilion.

“Don’t know?” Bei Mingyuan’s voice suddenly deepened, as heavy as a boulder falling into an icy sea. “Of the seven lineages of the gods, only our Ice God lineage has fallen to such a state.

Good, very good. Xuanbing brat, you brought these Ice God lineage disciples to the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge to seek death? If this battle continues, are you planning to completely wipe out the Ice God lineage?”

Venerable Xuanbing stood in the cold wind, unable to utter a single word.

His icy blue robe wrapped around his thin figure, and tens of thousands of years of arrogance and forbearance turned into silence at this moment.

“What are you still standing there for?” Bei Mingyuan’s voice suddenly rose again, “Kneel down before me!”

He stepped down from the Xuanbing chariot and walked step by step to Kai’s side.

His steps were slow, each one leaving a frosty footprint on the stone slab. His

ice-blue robe trailed on the ground, the hem already a mess of blood and ice crystals.

He stopped, looking at Kai, at this young man whose cultivation was only at the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm yet who had just repelled the Heavenly Extreme Venerable.

Then he bent his knees and knelt down. His

knees struck the cracked stone slab with a dull thud.

He lowered his head, his forehead touching the ground, his white hair scattered among the blood, mud, and ice crystals. His

ice-blue robe spread out on the ground, like a submissive subject kneeling before a king.

A Pavilion Master of the Divine Abyss Pavilion who had lived for tens of thousands of years, an elder of the Ice God lineage, a powerful figure whose stomp could make countless forces tremble in the Seventeenth Heaven, knelt before Kai.

The Divine Abyss Pavilion disciples on the Xuanbing War Chariot looked at each other, unsure how to react.

They had never seen their Pavilion Master kneel before anyone, not even the Heavenly Extreme Venerable and the Holy Light Venerable, to whom the Pavilion Master had only slightly nodded.

At this moment, the Pavilion Master knelt before a young man at the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm.

“Ancestor above,” Venerable Xuanbing’s voice trembled, “Junior Xuanbing pays respects to Ancestor.”

Kai stood still, without moving.

He knew that Venerable Xuanbing wasn't kneeling before him, but before Bei Mingyuan within his sea of consciousness.

But he also sensed something else: Bei Mingyuan within his sea of consciousness was very quiet.

That quiet wasn't calmness, but a kind of serenity born from being suppressed by time and suffering for tens of thousands of years, suddenly finding solace in a junior's kowtow. Get up," Kai said calmly. "You're kneeling before your ancestor, not me. Get up and speak."

Venerable Xuanbing didn't rise immediately.

He knelt for three breaths, then slowly stood up.

His eyes were slightly red, not from crying, but from the instinctive physiological reaction of an old man who had lived for tens of thousands of years in extreme excitement.

He looked into Kai's eyes; those purple eyes held no pride, no condescension, only calmness.

That calmness made him suddenly understand why his ancestor had chosen to reside in this young man's sea of consciousness.

It wasn't a coincidence, not luck, but because this young man was inherently different.

"Kai."

Venerable Xuanbing's voice returned to normal, now with a touch of solemnity. "This Pavilion Master—no, I—I owe you a favor. You protected the remnant soul of my Ice God lineage's ancestor until now. The Ice God lineage will remember this favor."

"Xuanbing."

Venerable Shengguang's voice rang out in the cold wind. His voice was no longer gentle, but carried a chilling intent born of repeated mockery and a loss of patience. "Have you knelt enough?"

Venerable Xuanbing turned to face Venerable Shengguang.

Their gazes clashed in the air, the icy blue light contrasting sharply with the golden holy light.

On the plaza hundreds of feet wide, the two colors of pressure clashed, producing a low hum.

"Holy Light."

Venerable Xuanbing's voice was cold. "You saw it. The remnant soul of the Ice God lineage's ancestor is in Kai's sea of consciousness. He protected my ancestor's remnant soul; he is Venerable Xuanbing's benefactor. Consider the weight of the Divine Abyss Pavilion."

The smile had completely vanished from Venerable Shengguang's face.

His white robes billowed in the holy light, and his angular face, which had always worn a gentle, fake smile, was now as cold as stone.

Ninety-nine Light Stones simultaneously lit up on the altar behind him, the holy light cascading down and illuminating the plaza before the mountain gate.

"Palace Master Xuanbing," he said, his voice low, each word seemingly squeezed out between clenched teeth, "are you betraying the Divine Race?"

"Betraying the Divine Race?" Venerable Xuanbing laughed, a hoarse and sarcastic laugh. "Holy Light, tell me, when has the Divine Race ever considered the Ice God lineage one of their own?"

He stepped forward, his ice-blue robes remaining perfectly still in the holy light.

“Of the seven lineages of the Divine Race, how much exclusion, how many cold looks, how much injustice has the Ice God lineage suffered over tens of thousands of years? You dare to talk to me about betrayal today? Let me tell you, it wasn’t me who betrayed the Divine Race, it was the Divine Race that betrayed the Ice God lineage first.”

The Holy Light Venerable’s eye twitched. “Xuanbing, are you insane? Are you sure you want to turn against the entire Divine Race camp for a mere True Immortal Realm brat, a remnant of the Ice God lineage who crawled out of the lower realm? Have you thought about the fate of your five hundred disciples?”

“I have.”

Venerable Xuanbing’s voice was as calm as a stagnant pool. “I’ve thought it through very clearly. Today, if you attack Kai, you are attacking me

, Xuanbing. If you attack the Myriad Demon Ridge, you are attacking the Divine Abyss Pavilion. You have eight hundred disciples of the Heavenly Saint Palace behind you, I have five hundred disciples of the Divine Abyss Pavilion behind me, and the Myriad Demon Ridge has more than a thousand capable warriors. The two sides are fighting against you. You weigh your chances of winning.”

The atmosphere in the square suddenly froze.

The Holy Light Venerable’s face twitched.

He was quickly calculating. The eight hundred disciples of the Heavenly Saint Palace and the five hundred disciples of the Divine Abyss Pavilion were originally his reliance.

If Xuan Bing defected, that would be eight hundred against one thousand five hundred, not even counting Kai, the prodigy who single-handedly repelled the Heavenly Extreme Venerable.

If Kai and Xuan Bing joined forces, plus the Golden Immortal of Qingqiu in charge, his chances of winning were indeed less than ten percent.

“Xuan Bing,”

the Holy Light Venerable’s voice was extremely cold, “I have remembered what happened today. The Divine Race has also remembered it. You have severed yourself from the Divine Race, and you will have no place in the Seventeenth Heaven from now on.”

“Whether you have a place to stand or not is not up to you alone.”

The Xuan Bing Venerable’s voice was full of sarcasm and disdain, “Get out. Before this Pavilion Master changes his mind, take your people and get out of the territory of the Myriad Demon Ridge immediately.”

The Holy Light Venerable’s fist clenched.

The knuckles under the white robe made a slight grinding sound.

He stared at Venerable Xuanbing, then at Kai, and finally glanced at Qingqiu, who stood on the mountain gate wall, dressed in white robes and with his hands behind his back.

His gaze lingered on each person for a moment, as if etching their faces into the depths of his memory—not out of grudge, but to remember the scene that had humiliated him today.

Then he whirled around, his white robes billowing, his voice chillingly cold: “All members of the Heavenly Saint Palace, retreat!”

The floating altar slowly turned, the light from the ninety-nine Bright Stones dimming slightly.

The eight hundred disciples of the Heavenly Saint Palace turned around in perfect unison, their formation perfectly intact. Even in retreat, this army maintained a chilling discipline.

But on the edge of the altar beneath Venerable Saint Light’s feet, five fine cracks appeared from his clenched fingers.

The disciples at the very back of the formation couldn't help but look back at the gate of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. Their gaze held not anger, but confusion and a hint of resentment.

No one understood why, when victory seemed assured, the Pavilion Master had suddenly led the Ice God lineage to defect, and the Palace Master had simply retreated.

The last disciple of the Heavenly Saint Palace disappeared at the edge of the wasteland, and the afterglow of the holy light was swallowed up again by the misty forest.

The suffocating oppressive feeling that had enveloped the gates of the Myriad Demon Ridge finally dissipated.

A gentle breeze blew across the plaza, diluting the strong smell of blood.

The mountain gate slowly opened, and Qingqiu descended from the city wall.

Her white robes were covered with dust and sweat; controlling nine layers of restrictions to fight against an army of four thousand five hundred was an exhausting day, and even a Golden Immortal of the third rank was somewhat weary.

But her steps were still light, and a faint smile was in her fox-like eyes.

"Pavilion Master Xuanbing." She walked up to Venerable Xuanbing and nodded slightly. "Please."

Venerable Xuanbing glanced at her, then at Kai, and finally his gaze settled on Jiang Xuelan. "Little girl, lead the way."

Jiang Xuelan smiled slightly and turned to enter the mountain gate.

Half an hour later, in a side hall of the Demon Emperor's Palace in the Myriad Demon Ridge, everyone sat around a stone table.

Qingqiu sat in the main seat, with Kai and Jiang Xuelan on his left, and Guiyuanzi, Qingyunzi, and the Grand Elder of the Wanfa Sect on his right.

Venerable Xuanbing sat alone in the guest seat.

Their armor still bore traces of blood, and their faces showed signs of fatigue, but none complained of being tired.

Venerable Xuanbing picked up the spiritual tea on the table but didn't drink it. Steam rose from the teacup in his palm, the icy blue spiritual energy creating a strange contrast with the hot tea.

He looked at Jiang Xuelan, then at Kai.

"There is one more thing I need to tell you."

His voice returned to its usual calm and coldness. "Don't think that everything is fine just because you repelled the Heavenly Pole Palace and forced the Heavenly Saint Palace to retreat today." Qingqiu's brow twitched slightly. "What do you mean?" "

Although Venerable Tianji was defeated, and the Tianji Palace was crippled, don't forget that the Tianji Palace possesses something no other power has." Venerable Xuanbing put down his teacup and said, word by word, "A communication channel to the Eighteenth Heaven."

A moment of silence fell over the side hall.

The wind whistled through the cracks in the windowpanes, causing the candlelight to flicker.

"The Eighteenth Heaven?" Guiyuanzi's expression changed. "The Tianji Palace can contact the Eighteenth Heaven?"

"Yes."

Venerable Xuanbing's voice was deep. "The Tianji Palace is a branch of the Fire God lineage in the Seventeenth Heaven. The Fire God lineage still has true powerhouses in the Eighteenth Heaven. Given Venerable Tianji's crushing defeat, he won't remain silent.

He will disregard everything to contact the Eighteenth Heaven and request the divine experts to descend. And once the powerhouses of the Eighteenth Heaven arrive…"

He didn't finish, but everyone understood.

The powerhouses of the Eighteenth Heaven were beings that cultivators of the Seventeenth Heaven could only look up to.

The Heavenly Palace headquarters possesses a sacred spiritual vein and thousands of disciples under its command. Combined with the divine forces of the Eighteenth Heaven, if they are allowed to recover, they will undoubtedly launch a more ferocious counterattack.

After a long silence, Kai spoke, his voice still calm, "Then don't let them recover."

"You mean…" Venerable Xuanbing looked at Kai, a sharp glint in his icy blue eyes.

"Take advantage of the Heavenly Palace's weakened state and destroy it in one fell swoop."

Kai said this with the nonchalant tone of someone discussing what to eat, "Before the reinforcements from the Eighteenth Heaven descend, uproot the Heavenly Palace's foundation in the Seventeenth Heaven. Without a foothold, even if reinforcements arrive, they won't be able to cause any significant trouble."

Qingyunzi gasped, "Mr. Chen, although the Heavenly Palace is crippled, it still has eight hundred remaining soldiers. Although Venerable Tianji's cultivation has declined, even a starved camel is bigger than a horse. If we attack the Heavenly Palace now, isn't that…"

“That’s right, even a starved camel is bigger than a horse.”

Kai interrupted him, his purple eyes sweeping over everyone present. “But now we’re not a single horse anymore. The Ten Thousand Demon Ridge is still standing, and the Divine Abyss Pavilion has arrived. The three forces combined are enough to crush a crippled Heavenly Palace. If we wait for reinforcements from the Eighteenth Heaven to arrive before making a move, it will be too late.”

Venerable Xuanbing was silent for a moment, then slowly nodded. “Kai is right. Now that I’ve taken this side, I won’t hesitate any longer. The Divine Abyss Pavilion’s spies have been watching the Heavenly Palace for thousands of years. I have a general idea of where the passage to the Eighteenth Heaven is hidden.

From contacting the envoy to sending him down to the mortal realm, and then integrating the remnants of the Heavenly Palace, it will take at least a month. Within a month, we must destroy the Heavenly Palace.”

“Then what are we waiting for?” Kai stood up. “The wounded should stay and recuperate. The rest of you, go into seclusion immediately. One hundred days inside the Demon Suppression Tower equals one day outside. With the current resources, everyone’s combat strength should be restored within three days.”

Kai summoned the Demon Suppression Tower; only inside could they recover in the shortest time.

When Kai entered the Demon Suppression Tower, it was already filled with resources brought back from the Divine Alliance’s treasury.

Piles of crystals emitted multicolored light, rows of pills in jade bottles exuded a rich medicinal fragrance, and walls of cultivation manual jade slips emanated an ancient aura of law.

Kai sat cross-legged inside the tower.

In his battle with the Heavenly Venerable, he had almost directly confronted a peak third-grade Golden Immortal who had burned his essence blood.

Although the power of chaos restrained the holy light, the difference in their cultivation levels was undeniable, and every clash of swords consumed his vital essence.

His spiritual power had been depleted by seventy percent, and traces of the Heavenly Venerable's holy light remained in his meridians.

Upon internal inspection, he saw tiny cracks on the inner walls of several major meridians—hidden wounds left from the clash between holy light and chaotic power within his body.

If left to heal slowly in the outside world, it would take at least several months.

He picked up a crystal and held it in his palm.

He activated the Mind Concentration Technique, and the spiritual energy within the crystal was absorbed and transformed by the chaotic power, filling his parched meridians.

The cracks in the meridians slowly healed under the nourishment of the spiritual energy, and the traces of the holy light's scorching were gradually burned away by the chaotic fire.

Then came the second, the third, crystal after crystal, which were absorbed one by one, turning into grayish-white powder that slipped from his fingertips.

Pills were refined one after another, their medicinal power converging into torrents within his meridians, filling every tiny injury left by the previous battle.

Above his head, the runes of the Demon-Suppressing Tower slowly swirled.

The laws of time enveloped him, isolating him from the outside world's clamor, the smoke of the battlefield, and the pervasive stench of blood.

Only the sound of chaotic power surging through his meridians could be heard, like a giant dragon born from the primordial chaos gradually awakening from its long slumber.

Qingqiu, Guiyuanzi, Qingyunzi, and Xuanbing Venerable began to integrate their three forces, reorganize their units, and discuss the route to attack the Heavenly Pole Palace.

The light of the teleportation array shone day and night over the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, and intelligence from scouts poured back like snowflakes.

Everyone knew that this battle was not yet over.

At the same moment, in the Heavenly Pole Palace.

Deep within the Heavenly Pole Palace, in an ancient stone hall.

The Heavenly Pole Venerable sat on a cold stone throne, his golden robe now obscured by blood and mud.

Half of his hair had turned white, and his face bore more than ten deep wrinkles.

The aftereffects of burning his essence blood were rapidly eroding his body; his cultivation had already plummeted from the peak of the third rank of Golden Immortal to the first rank, and was slowly declining every day.

Before him, a massive bronze door slowly opened.

Behind the door was a deep void passage, its edges engraved with ancient war runes.

The runes were even older than the Heavenly Palace itself, radiating the power of Golden Immortal-level laws.

For tens of thousands of years, this door had only been opened three times, each opening signifying the Heavenly Palace's impending annihilation.

"Palace Master," a wounded elder knelt before the stone throne, his voice trembling, "Are you sure... you want to contact the Upper Realm?"

"Is there any other choice but to contact the Upper Realm?"

The Heavenly Venerable's voice was hoarse and weak. "Kai, Qingqiu, Xuanbing, they must all die. The Ten Thousand Demon Ridge must be razed to the ground. The supreme treasure must be obtained. I will pay any price, no matter who I summon, no matter how the Seventeenth Heaven is shattered..."

He coughed violently several times, golden blood spilling from the corner of his mouth, dripping onto his chest armor, staining the ancient runes a dark gold.

He took a deep breath, channeling his last strength into the bronze door.

The void passage behind the door began to slowly rotate, spatial power surging and blooming within. An ancient will emanated from the direction of the Eighteenth Heaven, cold and majestic, like a giant rock suspended in the heavens.

"What business does the lower realm have to disturb the upper realm?"

The Celestial Venerable knelt before the door, his forehead pressed against the cold bronze.

"The Palace Master of the Celestial Palace of the Seventeenth Heaven requests that the upper realm send down an envoy. The Divine Abyss Pavilion and the Heavenly Saint Palace have rebelled, the Daoist lineage has reappeared in the world, and the foundation of the Seventeenth

Heaven's divine race is in imminent danger." The void passage behind the bronze gate slowly rotated, spatial power surging silently within like an undercurrent in an abyss.

No sound rang out.

That gate had existed for countless millennia; every rune on its frame was etched with the lifeblood of a powerful figure from the ancient Fire God lineage, containing the power of laws connecting the two realms.

Each opening signified the rise and fall of the Fire God lineage on this land.

And this time, it was a gate of supplication.

The Celestial Venerable, a member of the Fire God lineage, knelt before the bronze gate, his forehead pressed against the cold bronze, his posture utterly humble.

He had been the Lord of the Celestial Palace for tens of thousands of years, accustomed to his high position, and hadn't faced anyone with such deference in a long time.

But now, his kneeling was devout, not out of loyalty to the gods, but out of a thirst for revenge.

He was willing to pay any price to summon a powerful figure from the upper realm, to flatten the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, to tear that purple-eyed youth apart with his own hands.

Deep within the void passage, the ancient will remained silent for a long time.

So long that Venerable Tianji began to doubt whether the other party simply disdained to respond to a defeated general from the lower realm.

The elders behind him also held their breath, daring not to make a sound.

Then the will spoke again.

The voice was cold and majestic, devoid of any emotion, each word like a muffled thunderclap from the clouds.

“Why is your cultivation so low?”

Venerable Tianji’s brows furrowed even lower. “Your subordinate is incompetent. A monster emerged from Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, possessing the power of chaos and protected by the Daoist inheritance.

Your subordinate burned his essence blood to fight him, and his cultivation plummeted from the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm to the first rank. The Divine Abyss Pavilion and the Heavenly Saint Palace stood by and watched me die, and your subordinate was outnumbered, which is why I have fallen to this state.” ”

The power of chaos? The Daoist inheritance?” A slight fluctuation appeared in the voice of the will, a kind of wariness caused by the stirring of long-forgotten memories. “Tell me in detail.”

Venerable Tianji took a deep breath, shifted his knees on the ground, and began to speak from the beginning. He recounted

in detail how Kai, with his cultivation at the sixth rank of True Immortal Realm, traversed the void passage to descend

to the sixteenth heaven. He described how he single-handedly annihilated the entire Divine Race Alliance, how he returned to the seventeenth heaven with the black stone token of the Chaos Dao Palace, and how he single-handedly withstood the full-force attack after Kai burned his essence blood.

He spoke meticulously, without embellishment, knowing that lies were meaningless and would only backfire in the face of such an existence.

A long silence followed from the other end of the void passage.

The Heavenly Venerable could sense that the will seemed to be deep in thought, or perhaps discussing something with someone.

After a long while, the will spoke again.

“What is the strength of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge?”

“Less than 1,500 men. But the Divine Abyss Pavilion has defected, and 500 disciples of the Ice God lineage have joined. With the three forces combined, their strength is not to be underestimated,” the Heavenly Venerable stated truthfully.

“How many fighting forces does the Heavenly Extreme Palace have left?”

“Less than eight hundred. But the Holy Light Venerable of the Heavenly Saint Palace is still alive, and the Heavenly Saint Palace still has eight hundred disciples. Although the Holy Light Venerable refused to help, he is still a member of the Light God lineage among the seven lineages of the God Clan, and he will not sit idly by and watch the God Clan’s foundation be swallowed up by the Myriad Demon Ridge.” The other

end of the void passage fell silent again.

This silence lasted longer than before, so long that the Heavenly Extreme Venerable thought the other party had severed the connection.

Then the will finally spoke, its voice carrying an undeniable determination.

“Head of the Heavenly Extreme Palace, the Upper Realm has decided to send two envoys down to the lower realm. Both are at the peak of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, wielding the Fire God’s magic weapon. They will arrive at the Seventeenth Heaven within ten days. During this time, you must guard the Heavenly Extreme Palace and there must be no further mishaps.”

The Heavenly Extreme Venerable suddenly raised his head, his eyes bursting with wild joy.

Two peak third-rank Golden Immortal Realm cultivators. In the Seventeenth Heaven, Qingqiu was only at the mid-stage of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, and the Heavenly Extreme Venerable himself was also at the peak of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm at his prime.

Two peak-level Golden Immortals at the third rank descending to the mortal realm simultaneously were enough to crush any force in the entire Seventeenth Heaven.

“Your subordinate obeys!” His voice trembled slightly with excitement.

“Furthermore,”

the voice of that will grew even colder, “the Divine Abyss Pavilion betrayed the Divine Race, and the remnants of the Ice God lineage must be completely eradicated. The Heavenly Saint Palace failed to offer aid; though its crime doesn’t warrant the destruction of the palace, the Holy Light Venerable must personally apologize to the upper realm. These matters will be handled by the envoy after he descends. You, cooperate well with the envoy.”

“Your subordinate understands!”

The void passage slowly closed, and the ancient will dissipated into its depths.

The runes on the bronze door gradually dimmed, and silence returned to the stone hall.

Only the flickering candlelight and the heavy breathing of the Heavenly Extreme Venerable remained.

The Heavenly Extreme Venerable slowly stood up, the wrinkles on his face appearing particularly deep in the candlelight, but a flame reignited in his eyes.

He turned around, looking at the elders kneeling behind him, a twisted smile curving his lips.

“Did you hear that? The Upper Realm is sending envoys. Two peak third-grade Golden Immortals, wielding fire-divine artifacts.”

His voice was hoarse yet powerful. “Kai, Qing Qiu, Xuan Bing, their deaths are imminent. They will all pay for their crimes in blood.”

The elders trembled with excitement.

Some kowtowed on the spot, while others wept.

They had fallen from being the most powerful force in the Seventeenth Heaven to a position where everyone could bully them. Their eight hundred remaining soldiers hid in the main hall, licking their wounds, not even daring to venture out to attack a small sect.

Now, the Upper Realm was finally going to make its move.

“Pass down the order.”

Venerable Tianji clenched his fist. “From today onwards, all defensive restrictions of the Tianji Palace are fully activated. All disciples are on high alert. Hold the main hall for ten days. When the envoys arrive, it will be the day the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge is destroyed.”
Meanwhile, at the Demon Suppression Tower in Ten Thousand Demon Ridge,

a day had passed outside the tower, while a hundred days had passed inside.

Kai sat cross-legged deep within the ninth level of the Demon Suppression Tower, his body surrounded by thick purple chaotic power.

The injuries from his battle with the Heavenly Supreme Venerable had completely healed; the cracks in his meridians had disappeared, and the

marks of the holy light's scorching had been completely burned away by the chaotic fire.

His spiritual power had not only returned to its peak state but was also purer than before the battle.

The mountain of crystals before him had been mostly consumed; tens of thousands of crystals had had their spiritual power drained, turning into grayish-white powder that covered the tower's floor, making it feel like walking on snow.

Thousands of pills had all been refined, their medicinal power devoured, transformed, and integrated into his meridians by the chaotic power.

The resources he had absorbed in the past hundred days were enough to allow an ordinary True Immortal cultivator to break through to the peak of the ninth rank of True Immortal.

But for him, who cultivated chaotic power, these resources only advanced his cultivation from the early stage of the seventh rank of True Immortal to the middle stage of the seventh rank.

The resources required for the power of chaos are enormous.

Each breakthrough requires dozens, even hundreds, of times more spiritual energy than other cultivators of the same level.

However, his combat power also far surpasses that of his contemporaries.

At the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm, he can already directly confront a peak third rank Golden Immortal Realm cultivator without being at a disadvantage.

Kai opened his eyes from meditation, a glint of light flashing in his purple pupils.

Although his cultivation had only increased by one minor realm, his power of chaos was more condensed than before. Every strand of spiritual energy was like divine iron that had been forged a thousand times, containing unimaginable power.

The protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture had also become denser under the nourishment of spiritual energy. The golden dragon patterns had already covered sixty percent of his skin. Once fully covered, it would be the day he achieved the Great Luo Golden Body.

He stood up and walked out of the Demon Suppression Tower.

Outside the tower, in the square of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, everyone was waiting for him.

Gui Yuanzi had recovered to his peak condition, his white beard and hair still damp with the residual spiritual energy from when he came out of the Demon Suppression Tower.

Qingyunzi's flying swords were all reforged, thousands of them hovering behind him, their light even more dazzling than before the battle.

The array masters of the Myriad Laws Sect repaired all the restrictions and used materials obtained from the Divine Alliance's treasury to set up several new killing arrays.

Most importantly, Venerable Xuanbing, along with five hundred disciples of the Divine Abyss Pavilion, had already joined the battle formation of the Myriad Demon Ridge.

Their ice-blue robes mingled with the armor of the Myriad Demon Ridge cultivators, creating a unique sight.

The disciples of the Ice God lineage were initially somewhat reserved, after all, they were former enemies who had suddenly become allies, and it was somewhat uncomfortable.

However, the disciples of the Guiyuan Sect took the initiative to approach them, sharing spirit wine and pills, and quickly broke down the barriers.

Seeing Kai walk out of the Demon Suppression Tower, everyone stopped what they were doing and stood up in unison.

Guiyuanzi clasped his hands in a fist salute, Qingyunzi nodded, and the Grand Elder of the Myriad Laws Sect bowed slightly.

Venerable Xuanbing stood at the forefront, his ice-blue robes fluttering in the wind. He gave Kai a deep look, then slowly nodded.

Kai's gaze swept over every cultivator in the plaza.

The disciples of the Guiyuan Sect were in high spirits, their eyes burning with fighting spirit.

The sword cultivators of the Qingyun Sword Sect had brand-new flying swords hanging behind them, the sword energy on the blades condensed and unyielding. The disciples of the Shenyuan Pavilion were clad in ice armor, their hands gripping their weapons tightly.

Everyone's face bore the same expression, a longing that had been suppressed for too long and was finally waiting for the moment to counterattack.

"Everyone,"

Kai spoke, his voice not loud, but clearly reaching everyone's ears, "The Tianji Palace still has eight hundred remnants. The Tiansheng Palace still has eight hundred disciples. They think we will wait at Wanyao Ridge, waiting for reinforcements from the Upper Realm to arrive, waiting for them to catch their breath before launching a counterattack. But today I want to tell you, we will not wait."

He paused, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

“We must let them know that Wan Yao Ridge is not a place they can come and go as they please. Today, we will raze Tianji Palace to the ground. Tomorrow, the Seventeenth Heaven will be our domain!”

The plaza was initially silent, then erupted in a deafening battle roar.

Thousands of cultivators shouted in unison, their voices piercing the clouds and even dispersing some of the thick fog above Wan Yao Ridge.

The golden sun, the silver moon, and the crimson sun hung high simultaneously, their rays bathing the faces of every cultivator, turning them a magnificent golden-red.

As the army set off, the sky was transitioning from dusk to dawn.

The first golden sun had not yet risen; the light of the silver and red moons intertwined on the earth, paving a silver-red path for the departing cultivators.

Kai led the vanguard, with five hundred sword cultivators from the Guiyuan Sect, supported by the flying sword formation of the Qingyun Sword Sect, charging straight towards the Tianji Palace’s mountain gate.

Qingqiu commanded the central army, leading the demon warriors of Wanyao Ridge and the array masters of Wanfa Sect, ready to provide support at any time.

Xuanbing Venerable led Shenyuan Pavilion to flank from the left, cutting off the retreat route of Tianji Palace.

The three armies, like three sharp swords, advanced swiftly towards Tianji Palace.

The outer outposts of Tianji Palace along the way were swiftly and decisively destroyed. The garrison troops in those outposts, already demoralized by the main force’s defeat, collapsed without even putting up a semblance of resistance against the overwhelming force of the three armies.

The few who attempted to resist were shredded by the sword formations of Guiyuan Sect, pinned to death by the flying swords of Qingyun Sword Sect, and frozen into ice sculptures by the icy power of Shenyuan Pavilion.

The main hall of Tianji Palace was located in the easternmost part of the seventeenth heaven, backed by a towering mountain, much of which had been hollowed out to create a labyrinthine underground palace.

Before them stood nine towers in a row, their bodies forged from meteorite gold from outer space, their tops ablaze with an inextinguishable holy flame.

The Heavenly Palace, a foundation built over thirty thousand years, once the most powerful force in the Seventeenth Heaven, now reduced to a mere eight hundred remnants huddled within this cold stone palace.

The Heavenly Venerable stood atop the highest tower, watching the approaching army in the distance.

His eyes were bloodshot, his teeth grinding together. He had anticipated Kai's arrival, but not so quickly. How long had it been?

Just a few days?

The cultivators of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge had not only recovered from their injuries but had also integrated the power of the Divine Abyss Pavilion, actively launching an attack. "Palace Master!"

An elder stumbled up the tower, his face filled with panic. "The army from Ten Thousand Demon Ridge is already a hundred miles away! Kai is personally leading the vanguard, with Xuan Bing from the Divine Abyss Pavilion on the left, and the Qingqiu army in the rear! The total force exceeds two thousand!"

"What's the panic!"

Venerable Tianji slammed his hand on the stone railing. “Tianji Palace’s 30,000-year foundation, its nine-layered protective array, and its 360 defensive barriers can’t even stop two thousand people?

Issue the order: activate all barriers, and have all disciples take their battle positions! Just hold out for a few days, and the envoy from the Upper Realm will arrive! Then, it will be their death day!”

The nine-layered protective array was activated instantly.

Nine golden light curtains appeared around Tianji Palace, each composed of thousands of runes, layered upon each other, like nine insurmountable shields.

The 360 defensive barriers meshed together like gears, forming a fearsome war fortress.

Holy light and flames erupted from the nine towers, dyeing the entire sky gold.

But Kai merely raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Purple chaotic fire extended from the sword, transforming into a hundred-zhang-long purple sword aura.

He didn’t gather his strength, nor did he use any fancy sword techniques; he simply slashed down with his sword.

The sword aura struck the nine-layered protective array of the Heavenly Palace as if it were a paper lantern.

The first layer of light barrier shattered into countless specks of light, followed by the second and third layers—the chaotic fire, like a hungry wolf pouncing on its prey, devoured the power of laws contained within the holy light barrier layer by layer.

The nine-layered protective array of the Heavenly Palace, which had never been breached since its founding, shattered completely before Kai in less than three breaths.

Golden specks of light rained down, revealing the true face of the Heavenly Palace to everyone.

The Heavenly Palace cultivators guarding behind the array stared in disbelief at this scene, their weapons trembling.

Thirty thousand years of foundation, three hundred and sixty defensive restrictions—all of this was as if it didn't exist before one person.

"Kill!" Kai's voice wasn't loud, but it evoked a roar from the two thousand cultivators.

The Guiyuan Sect's sword formation was the first to charge in. Five hundred Guiyuan Sect disciples formed thirty-six sword formations, like sharp knives simultaneously piercing the Tianji Palace's defenses.

The remnants of the Tianji Palace fought desperately, holy light and sword energy clashing fiercely in the air, each collision resulting in casualties.

But the Guiyuan Sect's sword formation operated flawlessly, the thirty-six formations working in perfect harmony, their offense and defense seamless, tearing the Tianji Palace's defenses apart piece by piece.

The Qingyun Sword Sect's flying sword formation followed closely behind.

Behind Qingyunzi, thousands of newly forged flying swords rained down like a storm, pinning the Tianji Palace cultivators to the ground.

The flying swords wove an impenetrable net in the air; no one could escape its grasp.

The disciples of Shenyuan Pavilion attacked from the left, their icy power freezing the holy light of Tianji Palace into ice. The icy blue aura intertwined with the golden holy light, forming a magnificent yet deadly domain.

Tianji Venerable stood atop the tower, watching his disciples being utterly slaughtered by the three armies, his eyes burning with madness.

He drew his golden spear, wanting to rush down and fight Kai to the death. But his hand was held tightly by an elder.

“Palace Master! You can’t go!”

The elder’s voice was choked with sobs. “Your cultivation is only at the first level of the Golden Immortal Realm; you’re no match for Kai! The envoy from the Upper Realm is about to descend; you can’t die here! The Tianji Palace’s legacy cannot be broken!”

Tianji Venerable’s arm froze in mid-air, his fingers gripping the golden spear shaft, his knuckles white.

He looked at the fallen disciples below, at the elders pinned to the ground by Qingyun Sword Sect’s flying swords, at the guards frozen into ice sculptures by Shenyuan Pavilion’s icy power, and emotions he had never shown before welled up in his eyes.

But in the end, he released his grip. The golden spear clattered to the ground.

“Retreat,” his voice was hoarse to the extreme, “Retreat to the underground chamber. Await the arrival of the envoy.”

When the Celestial Venerable led his last remaining confidants into the underground chamber, the Celestial Palace’s defenses had completely collapsed.

Six of the nine towers had been blasted down by the flying swords of the Azure Cloud Sword Sect, and holy light and flames lingered weakly amidst the ruins.

The plaza was littered with the corpses of Celestial Palace cultivators and the remains of their weapons; golden blood soaked the stone bricks, and the holy light and spiritual energy accumulated over thirty thousand years was rapidly dissipating.

Kai stood in the center of the ruins, his divine sense sweeping across the entire Celestial Palace.

He sensed the location where the Celestial Venerable was hiding—deep within the mountain, a chamber enveloped by dozens of layers of restrictions.

He also sensed the fluctuations of the void passage deep within the chamber; the fluctuations were faint, yet they carried an aura of law that did not belong to the seventeenth heaven.

It was a passage leading to the eighteenth heaven.

“Guiyuanzi, take men and guard the exit of that void passage. Kill anyone who comes out without mercy,” Kai transmitted his voice.

“Understood.”

Kai walked towards the secret chamber deep within the mountain.

Dozens of layers of restrictions were like waste paper before him, the chaotic fire burning through them one by one.

The door to the secret chamber was a single piece of extraterrestrial meteorite iron, three feet thick, but it was cleaved in two by the purple sword light of the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Inside the secret chamber, the Celestial Venerable sat on a cold stone seat, surrounded only by a few trusted elders.

He looked as if he had aged tens of thousands of years overnight; his hair was completely white, the wrinkles on his face were as deep as knife marks, his eyes were sunken, and his eye sockets were dark.

The aftereffects of burning his essence blood had hollowed out his body.

Seeing Kai enter the secret chamber, the Celestial Venerable slowly raised his head.

There was no fear, no anger in his eyes, only an indescribable weariness.

“You’ve come,” his voice was hoarse like sandpaper grinding iron.

Kai didn’t speak, but simply looked at him.

“I have lived for tens of thousands of years. From the eighteenth heaven, I laid the foundation for the Heavenly Pole Palace, ruling the seventeenth heaven for ten thousand years.”

The Heavenly Pole Venerable’s voice was soft, as if speaking to himself. “I have imagined countless ways to die: at the hands of a stronger being, in an ancient secret realm, or when I suffer a cultivation deviation. But I never imagined I would die at the hands of a youth whose cultivation is below the Golden Immortal realm.”

He paused, then suddenly laughed.

The laugh was ugly, full of self-mockery. “Kai, who exactly are you?”

Kai walked up to him, looking down at him. “Who I am is unimportant. What’s important is that you could have lived.”

The Heavenly Pole Venerable’s smile froze.

“You attacked Ten Thousand Demon Ridge because you coveted that supreme treasure. You burned your life essence because you were unwilling to accept defeat. You contacted the Upper Realm because you

wanted to use external forces for revenge. Every step was your own choice." Kai's voice was calm. "No one forced you."

The Celestial Venerable remained silent for a long time. Then he slowly closed his eyes.

"Make your move."

A purple sword light flashed and disappeared in the secret chamber.

When Kai walked out of the secret chamber, only a pile of ashes remained behind him.

The Celestial Palace Master, the 137th generation successor of the Fire God lineage, had fallen. News of the destruction of the Heavenly Pole Palace spread throughout the Seventeenth Heaven.

When the news of the Heavenly Pole Palace being leveled and the Heavenly Pole Venerable's death reached the Heavenly Saint Palace, the Holy Light Venerable was meditating on the altar.

He sat cross-legged in the center of ninety-nine luminous stones, his white robe as white as snow, his face calm, looking like a transcendent deity.

But upon closer inspection, one could see that his fingers were trembling slightly.

"Kai… leveled the Heavenly Pole Palace?" His voice remained calm, but the rising chill in his tone could no longer be concealed.

"Yes."

The disciple kneeling below the altar was pale-faced, "The nine-layered protective array of the palace was cleaved open with a single sword strike. The Heavenly Pole Venerable led the last elders to hide in the underground secret chamber, where he was personally killed by Kai. The Heavenly Pole Palace… no longer exists."

The Holy Light Venerable remained silent for a long time. The holy light on the altar was still warm, but he felt a chill seeping from his very bones.

He remembered those events: the Heavenly Pole Palace's three thousand-strong army marched out in a mighty force, only to suffer heavy losses before the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge.

The Celestial Venerable burned his life essence in a desperate fight, while he and Xuanbing

stood by and watched him perish. Xuanbing, because of the remnant soul of the Ice God lineage's ancestor's defection, led the Heavenly Saint Palace disciples and retreated without looking back.

Now, the Celestial Palace is destroyed, the Celestial Venerable is dead, and Kai, the instigator of all this, is leading a large army towards the Heavenly Saint Palace.

"Two thousand men... the Divine Abyss Pavilion has also joined... Kai is personally leading the army..."

His heart tightened, as if gripped by an invisible hand.

He knew very well that the eight hundred disciples of the Heavenly Saint Palace couldn't withstand Kai's sword; Xuanbing was on Kai's side, and Qingqiu was on Kai's side.

"Palace Master!" Another disciple rushed into the hall, his face filled with terror. "The army of Ten Thousand Demon Ridge has arrived outside the palace gates! Kai sent someone to deliver a message, saying..."

"What did he say?"

"He gave the Palace Master two choices. First, surrender, hand over all the resources of the Heavenly Saint Palace, abandon the Divine Race stronghold in the Seventeenth Heaven, and retreat to the Upper Realm.

Second…” The disciple’s voice trembled, “…following in the footsteps of the Heavenly Extreme Palace.”

The Holy Light Venerable clenched his fists, his knuckles cracking, his nails digging into his palms, drawing a trace of blood.

He remained silent for several breaths.

He raised his head and swept his gaze over the panicked elders and disciples below the altar.

Their faces were filled with fear; the glory of the Seven Lineages of the Divine Race in the past was now worthless in the face of fear.

After a long while, he finally spoke.

“Surrender.”

When these two words came out of his mouth, they carried a humiliation heavier than death.

The gates of the Heavenly Saint Palace slowly opened, and the Holy Light Venerable personally stepped out of the palace, handing over the accumulated wealth of the Heavenly Saint Palace over thirty thousand years.

Ninety-nine Bright Stones were removed from the altar, thousands of Holy Light Pills were sealed in jade boxes, mountains of crystals were stored in storage rings, and walls of cultivation technique jade slips were carefully moved back to Ten Thousand Demon Ridge by the array masters of the Myriad Laws Sect.

Adding to the treasure trove of the Heavenly Extreme Palace, the resources Kai had amassed had reached an astonishing level.

The entire accumulation of two Golden Immortal-level forces: hundreds of thousands of crystals, tens of thousands of pills, thousands of magic artifacts, and tens of thousands of cultivation technique jade slips.

These resources were enough for the four forces—Ten Thousand Demon Ridge, Guiyuan Sect, Qingyun Sword Sect, and Shenyuan Pavilion—to cultivate for thousands of years.

However, Kai did not distribute the resources equally among them. He left half for Ten Thousand Demon Ridge for reconstruction and defense. The remaining half was moved entirely into the Demon Suppression Tower.

He intended to break through to the eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm.

Each small advancement in Chaos Power required dozens of times the resources of a cultivator of the same level, but this sacrifice was worthwhile.

Because on the other side of the Seventeenth Heaven, the void passage still existed.

The envoy from the Eighteenth Heaven could descend at any moment.

What he needed to do now was to maximize his combat power before the envoy arrived. At the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm, he had a fighting chance against the peak of the third rank of Golden Immortal Realm.

But that wasn’t enough.

He needed to become stronger.

Inside the Demon Suppression Tower, Kai sat cross-legged in the center of a mountain of resources.

Hundreds of thousands of crystals formed a small mountain, engulfing him in multicolored light.

Tens of thousands of pills floated around him, like a dazzling sea of stars.

The dense spiritual energy had liquefied into a visible spiritual mist, flowing slowly within the tower.

With each breath, he inhaled pure spiritual liquid.

He closed his eyes, fully activating the Mind Concentration Technique.

The crystals began to shatter.

Not one by one, but batch after batch—thousands upon thousands of crystals were simultaneously drained of their spiritual energy, turning into grayish-white powder.

The liquefied spiritual mist formed a huge vortex around him, and the spiritual liquid surged into his meridians like a burst dam, then was devoured, transformed, compressed, and devoured again by the power of chaos.

Under the repeated cleansing of spiritual energy, his meridians widened continuously, transforming from rivers into vast oceans.

The power of chaos increased at a visible rate, advancing from the mid-stage of the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm to the late stage, and then from the late stage to the peak.

Still not enough.

He began to absorb medicinal pills.

Tens of thousands of pills exploded simultaneously, their medicinal power converging into a torrent that rushed into his body. The power was so violent it almost tore his meridians apart, but the protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture instantly activated, firmly locking the medicinal power within his meridians.

The chaotic fire burned in his dantian, melting all the spiritual energy, medicinal power, and fragments of laws into the purest chaotic power.

The chaotic power within his meridians grew increasingly concentrated, its color gradually changing from pale purple to deep purple, and finally to an almost blackish purple.

The bottleneck loosened.

An invisible barrier within his body emitted a faint cracking sound, as if a stone door sealed for ten thousand years had finally been pushed open.

The chaotic power, like a flood breaking through a dam, instantly surged past the bottleneck.

His cultivation level jumped from the peak of the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm to the eighth rank in one fell swoop.

Kai opened his eyes.

The chaotic energy in his purple eyes was so dense that it almost overflowed.

In that instant, the entire Demon Suppression Tower trembled, not because he deliberately released his pressure, but because his very presence caused the time law of the Demon Suppression Tower to groan under unbearable pressure.

All the protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture were activated, golden dragon patterns covered his entire body, reflecting the purple chaotic power, making him look like a god who had emerged from the primordial chaos.

Eighth rank of True Immortal Realm.

He clenched his fist.

The chaotic power in his meridians was several times more powerful than before, each strand condensed to the extreme.

He had a feeling that now, facing the Celestial Venerable burning his life essence, he wouldn't need to engage in a prolonged battle.

One sword strike would suffice.

When he stepped out of the Demon-Suppressing Tower, Qingqiu, Venerable Xuanbing, Guiyuanzi, and Qingyunzi were all waiting outside.

They had sensed the terrifying spiritual energy fluctuations within the tower and had long since stopped what they were doing.

The moment Kai emerged from the tower, everyone held their breath. Not because his cultivation had improved again, but because his aura had changed.

It wasn't the aura of a True Immortal cultivator; it had transcended the True Immortal realm, even making Qingqiu, a third-grade Golden Immortal, feel a sense of oppression.

"Eighth-grade True Immortal,"

Qingqiu said, scrutinizing him, a complex expression flashing in his amber eyes. "I have lived for tens of thousands of years and have never seen a True Immortal cultivator exude such an aura. Kai, what kind of monster are you?"

Kai didn't answer the question.

He looked at the sky; three blazing suns hung simultaneously in the heavens.

Golden, silver, and crimson light intertwined, dyeing the Myriad Demon Ridge a magnificent golden-red.

His gaze then shifted to the east, the direction of the Heavenly Pole Palace, and also the direction of the void passage.

"The envoy should be arriving soon," he said calmly.

As soon as he finished speaking, a deep rumble echoed from the eastern horizon.

The sound was like a thousand thunderbolts exploding simultaneously in the sky, or the muffled breath of an ancient beast awakening.

A golden pillar of light shot into the sky from the depths of the Heavenly Palace, piercing through the clouds, the firmament, and the spatial barrier between the seventeenth and eighteenth heavens.

Within the pillar of light, two figures descended from the sky.

Both figures wore golden armor, their bodies engulfed in blazing holy flames.

These flames were completely different from the holy light of the Heavenly Venerable; they were purer, more ancient, and closer to the origin of the laws of holy light. Their

armor was inscribed with war runes of the ancient Fire God lineage, each rune radiating the pressure of a peak third-grade Golden Immortal.

Their faces were obscured by the holy light, only blurry outlines visible, but even those outlines were enough to suffocate one.

They descended upon the plaza of the ruins of the Heavenly Palace, their feet trodden upon corpses and crumbling walls.

All nine towers had collapsed, the holy flames extinguished, the stone slabs of the plaza soaked in blood, and the air thick with the stench of decay.

The Heavenly Palace, once a formidable force that had dominated the Seventeen Heavens for tens of thousands of years, was now nothing but ruins.

The envoy on the left slowly raised his head, his eyes beneath the holy light visor sweeping across the ruins.

His gaze lingered for a moment on each corpse, swept over each crumbling wall.

Then his voice rang out, cold as a poisoned blade: “Too late.”

The envoy on the right bent down, reaching out to touch the dried golden blood on the ground.

The blood had congealed into a dark golden film, crumbling into powder at the slightest touch.

“The battle ended only a few days ago. The Heavenly Palace has indeed been destroyed.” His voice was more composed than his companion’s, yet carried the same icy chill. “True Immortal Realm, seventh rank? Or eighth rank?” ”

Regardless of the rank, a mere ant from the lower realm could not possibly withstand the combined might of the two of us.” The envoy on the left straightened up, holy light erupting from his body, illuminating the ruins within a radius of several hundred feet. “Find him. Kill him. Then rebuild the Heavenly Palace.”

The two simultaneously looked up, their gazes piercing through thousands of miles of space, locking onto the direction of the Myriad Demon Ridge.

Then, the two transformed into two golden streaks of light, flying towards the Myriad Demon Ridge at an unimaginable speed.

Wherever the streaks of light passed, the air was ignited by the holy light, leaving behind two golden trails of flame tens of miles long that lingered for a long time.

…

In front of the gates of the Myriad Demon Ridge, everyone was already on high alert.

Kai stood at the forefront, the Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist.

Guiyuanzi led the Guiyuan Sect's sword array on the left, while Qingyunzi led the flying sword array on the right. The array masters of the Wanfa Sect had activated all the restrictions, and layers of light curtains completely enveloped the mountain gate.

Xuanbing Venerable stood beside Kai, holding an ice-blue Xuanbing Pearl in his palm. An intensely dense, almost unbearable, icy aura emanated from the pearl, freezing the ground into a thin layer of frost.

Two golden streaks of light landed before the mountain gate, and the holy light on the envoys slowly receded, revealing their true forms.

The two men looked almost identical, both middle-aged, with resolute faces and the arrogance unique to the divine race.

The runes on their armor shimmered, and the magical weapons in their hands exuded a destructive aura.

The envoy on the left held a double-edged battle axe burning with holy flames, its blade engraved with war runes.

The envoy on the right held a blazing white spear, its tip pulsating with compressed holy light laws.

"Who is Kai?" The voice of the envoy on the left was devoid of emotion, like an executioner confirming the identity of a prisoner before carrying out a sentence.

Kai stepped forward. His movements were calm, as if he had been called by name while taking a walk and had casually responded. "That's me."

The two envoys sized him up, a hint of contempt flashing in their eyes simultaneously.

Eighth-grade True Immortal Realm, although a small realm higher than the seventh-grade True Immortal Realm mentioned in the intelligence, was utterly insignificant in front of the peak of the third-grade Golden Immortal Realm.

This gap in cultivation could not be bridged by techniques, bloodlines, or any fortuitous encounters.

In their understanding, a True Immortal Realm cultivator didn't even have the right to make a move against a Golden Immortal Realm cultivator.

"Kill."

The envoy on the left didn't even bother to say more. His figure flashed, and his battle axe, carrying holy flames powerful enough to flatten a mountain, cleaved down towards Kai.

The axe blade tore through the air, emitting a piercing sonic boom, and holy flames condensed on the axe blade into a blazing white light blade tens of feet long.

Kai did not dodge. He drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword, the chaotic fire on its blade clashing head-on with the holy light.

Boom…

A visible shockwave rippled outwards from the point of impact, blasting a massive crater several meters deep into the ground in front of the mountain gate.

Cracks spread hundreds of meters away, and stone slabs, flung by the aftershocks, tumbled through the air and crashed against the mountain walls.

The shockwave forced the Azure Cloud Sword Sect's flying swords back several meters, their blades flickering.

The left-hand envoy's pupils contracted sharply. His battle axe bounced back, his arms went numb, and a sharp pain shot through his tiger's mouth.

A mere True Immortal Realm ant had actually withstood his full-force attack without retreating a single step?

How was this possible?

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Kai gave him no time to react.

The second sword strike came.

This strike had no charging, no initial stance, and not even any warning.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword cut directly into the air from the previous blocking stance, its blade tracing a straight purple trajectory.

The envoy on the left parried with his axe, all the holy light runes on his battle axe activating to form a hexagonal holy light shield.

But the chaotic fire directly devoured the runes, and the sword energy pierced through the holy light protection, striking the axe handle.

The axe handle, forged from meteorite gold, was like rotten wood before the purple sword energy, severed in one strike.

Not just the handle. The sword energy, undiminished, pierced through the envoy's armor, through the holy light shield, and through the holy light power circulating to its limit in his meridians.

The envoy's body was cleaved diagonally from his right shoulder to his left abdomen, golden blood spraying into the air, turning into a sky full of golden blood mist.

Upon landing, his body was already split in two, his upper body slumped on the broken stone slab, an incredulous look still lingering in his eyes.

One sword strike.

A peak third-grade Golden Immortal, killed with a single blow.

He wasn't human—this was the only thought in the left envoy's final moments.

How could an eighth-grade True Immortal possibly kill a third-grade Golden Immortal with a single strike?

This violated the laws of heaven and earth, violated the most basic understanding of the cultivation world for countless millennia.

But his consciousness had already dissipated, and he would never have the chance to understand this question again.

The right envoy's expression changed drastically.

His companion, a peak third-grade Golden Immortal of the same level as him, had been cut in two without even being able to block a single sword strike.

This wasn't human; this was a monster, a reincarnation of an ancient ferocious beast, a killing god born from chaos!

He turned and ran without hesitation, his holy light instantly burning to its peak, his entire body transforming into a golden meteor shooting eastward.

The speed was extreme, several times faster than when it came. It was the escape speed gained by burning his very essence, each breath consuming hundreds of years of his cultivation.

Kai did not give chase.

He sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword, his gaze calmly fixed on the golden streak of light disappearing into the east.

The east was the direction of the ruins of the Heavenly Palace, and also the location of the void passage leading to the Eighteenth Heaven.

“He will go back to report.”

Venerable Xuanbing walked to his side, his voice low. “The divine forces of the Eighteenth Heaven will not let this go. One envoy was killed with a single sword strike, and another was driven to flee in disarray. This is a great disgrace to the divine race. Next time, it won’t be a third-grade Golden Immortal.”

“So, instead of waiting for them to come down, we should take the initiative to go up.”

Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword, his purple eyes turning eastward. “He’s going back to the Eighteenth Heaven, perfect. I’ll follow him and find the stronghold of the divine forces there.”

Venerable Xuanbing was silent for a moment, then slowly nodded. “The Eighteenth Heaven is not like the Seventeenth Heaven. The divine forces there are countless times stronger than the Heavenly Palace. Although you can kill a third-grade Golden Immortal with a single sword strike, there are many stronger beings in the Eighteenth Heaven. Are you sure you want to go?”

Kai did not answer the question.

He simply placed his hand on the hilt of his Dragon-Slaying Sword, using action to answer.

In fact, Kai was not only going to the Eighteenth Heaven to destroy the divine forces, but he was going to find the so-called Chaos Dao Palace.

Before setting off, Kai entrusted the affairs of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge to Qingqiu, Guiyuanzi, and Venerable Xuanbing.

He no longer needed to worry about the Seventeenth Heaven; the Heavenly Extreme Palace had been destroyed, the Heavenly Saint Palace had surrendered, and the Divine Abyss Pavilion was on the side of the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge. The three forces working together were enough to stabilize the situation in the entire Seventeenth Heaven.

Even if there were still dissenting forces, they wouldn't be able to cause any significant trouble under the combined efforts of Qingqiu, Venerable Xuanbing, and Guiyuanzi.

He took the black stone token from his storage ring and held it in his palm.

The black stone felt slightly warm in his palm, and the chaotic power resonated with the spatial fragments within it.

The patterns on the surface of the black stone reappeared, this time clearer than before, faintly forming a star map.

At the center of the star map was an ancient palace shrouded in chaotic mist, with the four characters "Chaotic Dao Palace" inscribed on its gate.

He put away the black stone and walked to the mountain gate.

Jiang Xuelan was already waiting for him there.

Clad in white, her hair as black as ink, she held a silver-white longsword in her hand.

Her face showed no fear, no tension, only her usual calm and determination.

"The Eighteenth Heaven," she said, "This time, I can finally travel with you."

Kai looked at her, a rare gentleness flashing in his purple eyes. "Let's go."

The two transformed into two streaks of light, one purple and one white, flying eastward.

There, deep within the ruins of the Heavenly Palace, the entrance to the void passage still emitted faint spatial fluctuations.

At the other end of the passage lay the Eighteenth Heaven.

Qingqiu stood on the mountain gate wall, watching the two streaks of light recede into the distance, silent for a long time. “I have lived for tens of thousands of years and have never seen such a person.”

The wind blew through her long white hair, making her voice broken and intermittent, “Perhaps the heavens of the Eighteenth Heaven should change.”

Venerable Xuanbing stood beside her, his ice-blue robes fluttering in the wind.

His gaze followed the departing purple light, his lips twitching slightly. “The remnant soul of the Ancestor is still in that brat’s sea of consciousness. This Pavilion Master hopes that brat lives, not only for the sake of the Ice God lineage’s inheritance.”

He paused, not continuing.

But Qingqiu understood his meaning.

Not only the inheritance, but also the humiliation of being oppressed, ostracized, and suppressed by the gods for tens of thousands of years.

Kai shattered the shackles imposed on everyone in the Seventeenth Heaven by the gods, and now he was going to the Eighteenth Heaven, to the true lair of the gods, to continue his path.

That path might be a one-way street, but that young man seemed never to have thought of turning back.

The entrance to the void passage drew closer, and spatial power surged in like a tide.

Kai gripped Jiang Xuelan's hand tightly, and the two stepped into the passage leading to the Eighteenth Heaven together.

Behind them, the void passage slowly closed, and the mountains and ruins of the Seventeenth Heaven disappeared into the void.

Ahead, the world of the Eighteenth Heaven was slowly unfolding, the sky there was more vast, the spiritual energy more abundant, and the enemies more powerful.

But there was no fear on Kai's face.

He was just thinking about how to open the gate to the Chaos Dao Palace. The void passage slowly closed.

Inside Tianjue City, Wu Heng, the president of the Void Merchant Guild, gazed at the crimson glow on the horizon. He knew Kai had gone to the Eighteenth Heaven, and now even the Seventeenth Heaven was under Kai's control.

Kai hadn't touched him; Wu Heng didn't know if it was because Kai dared not, or simply disdained.

But one thing was certain: Wu Heng absolutely couldn't let the Daoist inheritance, the Great Luo Golden Scripture, escape like this—it was an extremely valuable item.

Wu Heng immediately contacted Wu Yuan through the guild's inter-heavenly communication array.

The Void Merchant Guild's inter-heavenly communication array was an extremely precious ancient relic, consuming hundreds of top-grade spirit stones each time it was used, and was never used lightly unless absolutely necessary.

Wu Yuan, the president of the Void Merchant Guild in the Eighteenth Heaven, was Wu Heng's brother.

Wu Yuan's face appeared in the communication array.

Wu Heng relayed Kai's information verbatim, adding at the end: "This young man possesses the Great Luo Golden Scripture, a supreme inheritance of the Daoist sect lost for tens of thousands of years. If we can seize this scripture, the status of our Void Merchant Guild in the heavens will rise to another level. Brother, you must intercept him in the Eighteenth Heaven, at any cost."

Wu Yuan listened in silence for a moment, his fingers lightly tapping the armrest of his chair.

Then he smiled, not the usual amiable smile of a merchant, but the smile of a hunter who had discovered his prey.

"The Great Luo Golden Scripture? A supreme inheritance of the Daoist sect lost for tens of thousands of years? Interesting. A mere True Immortal Realm youth, possessing such a treasure, yet daring to venture alone into the Eighteenth Heaven. Brother Heng, rest assured, I have my arrangements."

After finishing the message, Wu Yuan stood up, walked to the edge of the Void Pavilion, and looked down at the land of the Eighteenth Heaven.

The sea of clouds surged beneath his feet. From ten thousand meters above, the nine golden pagodas of the Flame God Palace and the floating altar of the Bright Hall resembled two flames of different colors burning across the vast land.

"Kai."

He murmured the name softly, as if savoring a delicious dish about to be served. "He possesses the Great Luo Golden Scripture and the power of chaos. Those fools from the Flame God Palace and the Hall of Light only

know how to kill, but they don't know how to strip him clean before killing him. What a waste."

He turned around and instructed his trusted aides, "Pass down the order to closely monitor all intelligence about Kai. I must be the first to know his every move."

The aides hesitated for a moment. "Guild Master, are we going to... capture him?"

"Capture?"

Wu Yuan shook his head. "No. We're going to help him. Help him gain a foothold, help him fight against the Flame God Palace and the Hall of Light, help him become a hegemon of the Eighteenth Heaven."

He paused, his smile becoming even more meaningful. "When he has trampled all his enemies under his feet, when he is grateful to us and completely unguarded, that will be the best time for us to make our move."

...

The void passage slowly closed behind him, and the last ray of light of the Seventeenth Heaven was swallowed by the spatial rift.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan were swept along by the power of space, traversing layers of spatial barriers at an unimaginable speed.

The surrounding light and shadow constantly distorted, sometimes like a dazzling galaxy, sometimes like a deep abyss, and sometimes transforming into countless fragmented images.

These images were fragments of various worlds swept along the spatial passage: some with verdant mountains and clear waters, some with mountains of corpses and seas of blood, and some with a desolate starry sky.

Jiang Xuelan's hand gripped Kai's arm tightly. This wasn't her first time traversing a void passage, but this time was different. This time there was no clear exit, no Qingqiu opening a door for them at the other end; they were forcibly entering an unknown world, chasing the spatial trajectory of a fleeing messenger.

The spatial turbulence in the passage was several times stronger than before, each turbulence containing destructive power enough to tear apart a True Immortal Realm cultivator.

Kai was surrounded by purple chaotic power, forming a semi-transparent light shield protecting the two of them.

The spatial turbulence, powerful enough to tear apart even True Immortal cultivators, crashed into the light barrier and silently dissolved, without even causing a ripple.

Chaos inherently contains the source of spatial laws; before the power of chaos, these spatial turbulences are merely trickles returning to their origin.

His purple eyes remained fixed on the dissipating golden trail ahead—the spatial imprint left by the fleeing messengers, their navigational line.

"Almost there," Kai said calmly, as if discussing something trivial.

As soon as he finished speaking, a blinding white light suddenly exploded ahead.

The light, like a blazing sun, illuminated the entire void passage.

After the white light faded, a rift appeared at the end of the passage—the exit, the gate to the Eighteenth Heaven.

The two rushed out of the rift and landed on unfamiliar land.

Beneath their feet was dark red sand, not a natural ochre, but a deep brown formed from countless drops of blood.

Countless fragments of bone and metal rubble were mixed in with the sand, crunching underfoot.

An ancient, heavy, decaying stench permeated the air—the smell of flesh and blood rotting for tens of thousands of years, seeping into the soil, the air, and every inch of space.

As far as the eye could see, the wasteland stretched endlessly, devoid of any vegetation or life.

Only jagged rocks and massive skeletons lay scattered across the ground.

Some skeletons resembled those of some colossal beast, a single rib tens of meters long, jutting diagonally from the sand, their surfaces covered in moss and cracks.

Others were humanoid, several times larger than a normal person, their bones a dark gold color; tens of thousands of years of wind and sand had only dulled their luster, not erased their shape.

One dark gold skeleton remained in a fighting stance, arms raised high, the weapon it once held now dust, but the fighting spirit seemed to remain frozen within its bones.

The sky was a deep purple, even more so than the sky of the Seventeenth Heaven.

Three blazing suns hung high in the sky: one golden, one silvery-white, and one crimson.

Their rays intertwined, painting the entire wasteland with a magnificent yet eerie hue.

The air contained spiritual energy several times richer than that of the Seventeenth Heaven, but mixed within this energy was an inexplicable, violent aura—

the lingering killing intent left behind by countless powerful warriors who had fought here over tens of thousands of years, now fused with the spiritual energy.

“This place…” Jiang Xuelan looked around, a hint of shock flashing in her eyes, “What happened here?”

“An ancient battlefield.”

Kai’s divine sense had already spread outwards, the power of chaos transforming into invisible ripples covering an area of thousands of miles. “It was a large-scale battle, and the participants were all highly skilled. The owners of these skeletons were at least at the Golden Immortal realm in life.”

His divine sense continued to probe deeper into the wasteland, sensing several extremely ancient auras in its deepest depths.

Those auras appeared and disappeared intermittently, like a giant whale occasionally surfacing from the deep sea, each appearance causing the laws of space to tremble.

Those were the remnant souls of powerful beings who perished here tens of thousands of years ago, now fused with the spatial rifts of the wasteland, existing between life and death, neither attacking nor dissipating, simply slumbering eternally in this forgotten land.

“No threat for now,”

Kai withdrew his divine sense, “but their existence affects the stability of the spatial laws. Fighting here, we can’t carelessly tear through space; spatial rifts might trigger a chain reaction, awakening things that shouldn’t be awakened.”

Jiang Xuelan nodded, keeping these words in mind.

“Let’s go, let’s find a place to stay first,” Kai said, walking forward, Jiang Xuelan following behind. At this moment, the envoy who had escaped from the Seventeenth Heaven had arrived at a magnificent palace.

This was the Flame God Palace, the power base of the Fire God lineage of the Divine Race.

The entire palace floated tens of thousands of feet in the sky, supported by nine golden towers, their bodies forged from divine metal from beyond the heavens, and their tops burning with an inextinguishable ancient divine fire.

Below the palace was an endless sea of clouds, and beneath that sea of clouds lay the most prosperous land of the Eighteenth Heaven, the Flame Continent, with tens of thousands of miles of fertile fields and hundreds of cities prostrating themselves in the shadow of the Flame God Palace.

This was the foundation of the Fire God lineage in the Eighteenth Heaven, ruling this land for a hundred thousand years, and every palace master had been a Golden Immortal of the Fifth Rank or higher.

Yan Wuji sat on the Flame God Throne in the center of the hall, his body engulfed in blazing golden flames.

His face was obscured by the flames, revealing only a pair of crimson-gold eyes, which were now fixed on the envoy kneeling in the center of the hall.

The envoy’s armor was mostly shattered, the holy runes were dim and lifeless, and the empty sleeve of his left arm swayed gently in the breeze of the hall.

He had his left arm severed by Kai’s sword in the Fallen God Wasteland, and only managed to escape back to the Flame God Palace by burning his life force with all his might. He didn’t even have time to treat his wound along the way, and golden blood stained the tens of thousands of miles of his journey home.

“You mean,” Yan Wuji’s voice came from the flames, unhurried yet causing the temperature in the entire hall to rise sharply, “that you and Yan Lie, working together, were both killed by a mere eighth-grade True Immortal with a single sword strike, and your arm was severed with another?”

The envoy’s forehead touched the ground, his voice trembling, “Reporting to the Palace Master, that Kai… he possesses the power of chaos, something that counteracts all holy light and divine fire. My holy light protection was like paper before him, and Senior Brother Lie’s battle axe was cleaved in two by his sword, utterly ineffective…”

“The power of chaos.”

Yan Wuji repeated these four words, his crimson-gold eyes in the flames narrowing slightly, “The message from that good-for-nothing Tianji said that this boy possesses the power of chaos, I thought it was just some kind of unorthodox method similar to the aura of chaos. I never expected it to be the real power of chaos.”

He stood up from his throne, the flames surging with his movement, and hundreds of divine fire lamps in the hall exploded simultaneously, golden sparks flying everywhere.

The dozens of elders and disciples standing in the hall knelt down in unison, not daring to raise their heads.

“Eighth-rank True Immortal, Chaotic Power, slaying a peak Third-rank Golden Immortal with a single sword strike.”

Yan Wuji’s voice was terrifyingly calm. “Such cross-rank combat power, I’ve only seen in ancient texts. Descendants of ancient Chaotic Divine Beasts, or those lost supreme inheritances of the Daoist sect.”

He took a few steps, each step leaving a burning footprint on the ground.

“The Heavenly Palace was destroyed, Yan Lie was killed, and Yan Wu returned with a severed arm. For hundreds of thousands of years, the Fire God lineage has never suffered such a humiliation.”

He stopped, turned around, and his crimson-gold eyes swept over the kneeling crowd. “Who is willing to go to the Fallen God Wasteland and capture this boy?”

The hall was deathly silent.

No one dared to speak. Not because they were afraid of the eighth-rank True Immortal youth, but because they sensed a different meaning in Yan Wuji’s tone.

The Palace Master wasn’t asking for opinions; he was calling out names.

“Yan Po.”

Yan Wuji’s gaze fell on a middle-aged man.

The man knelt at the head of the elders’ seat, his physique as imposing as an iron tower, his face square, his brows carrying a sharpness honed through countless battles.

He was the Grand Elder of the Flame God Palace, a peak third-grade Golden Immortal, second only to Yan Wuji himself in cultivation within the Eighteen Heavens Fire God lineage, and commanded the Flame Dragon Guard, the most elite force of the Flame God Palace.

“Your subordinate is here.” Yan Po raised his head, his gaze steady.

“Take three squads of the Flame Dragon Guard, along with Elders Yan Hu and Yan Bao, and go to the Fallen God Wasteland to search for Kai.”

Yan Wuji’s voice brooked no argument. “Find him alive or dead. If you have the chance to capture him alive, bring him back. I want to personally extract his Chaos Power and see where that thing came from.”

“Your subordinate obeys.” Yan Po kowtowed and accepted the order.

Yan Hu and Yan Bao stepped out from the elders’ seat and knelt behind Yan Po.

Yan Hu, lean and wiry with a wild, predatory glint in his eyes, was the Execution Elder of the Flame God Palace, known for his ruthless methods.

Yan Bao, more composed, with a white, beardless face and sinister eyes, was the Intelligence Elder of the Flame God Palace, possessing an enigmatic knowledge of the entire Fallen God Wasteland’s terrain and spatial rift distribution.

All three were at the peak of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, and together with the thirty elite disciples of the Flame Dragon Guard’s third squad, each possessed a cultivation level of at least the first rank of the Golden Immortal Realm.

Such a lineup was more than capable of dealing with a mere eighth-rank True Immortal Realm youth, or even a fourth-rank Golden Immortal Realm expert.

“Remember,”

Yan Wuji sat back on his throne, flames engulfing him once more, “The Fallen God Wasteland is no ordinary place. The spatial rifts there awaken ancient remnant souls, and the murderous intent and lingering resentment there affect the mind. Don’t cause any unnecessary trouble. Find the person and bring them back. If you encounter anyone from the Daoist sect…”

He paused, a cold glint flashing in his crimson-gold eyes within the flames, “…kill them without mercy.”

“Yes!”

The three acknowledged the order and withdrew.

Silence returned to the great hall, broken only by the faint crackling of the divine fire lamps.

Yan Wuji sat amidst the flames, his fingers lightly tapping the armrest of his throne, producing a dull thud. What

he didn't tell Yan Po was that he sensed a trace of aura belonging to the Fire God lineage on the escaped messenger.

The aura was faint, like a deliberately concealed spy, vanishing the moment Yan Wuji stepped into the Flame God Palace.

Someone was monitoring the Flame God Palace's every move.

And that person's cultivation was no less than his own.

"The Void Merchant Guild? Or the Daoist sect? Or perhaps... someone from the Hall of Light?"

Yan Wuji murmured to himself, his crimson-gold eyes flickering in the flames. "Whoever it is, if they want to snatch food from my mouth, they'd better think twice before they try to bite off more than they can chew."

Meanwhile, in Tianlan City, the location of the Void Merchant Guild in the Eighteenth Heaven.

Sky City floats tens of thousands of feet above the northernmost part of the Eighteenth Heaven. The entire city is pieced together from dozens of floating islands, connected by iron chains and teleportation arrays, forming a sky city stretching for hundreds of miles.

At the very center and highest point of the city, on the floating island, stands a completely black tower.

The tower has nine floors, each inlaid with tens of thousands of spatial crystals, refracting a seven-colored light under the sunlight.

These spatial crystals are not merely decorations, but the foundation upon which the Void Merchant Guild stands in the Eighteenth Heaven. They anchor all spatial nodes within a radius of tens of thousands of miles to the tower, ensuring that no one's movement within this area escapes the tower's surveillance.

This is the Void Pavilion, the headquarters of the Void Merchant Guild in the Eighteenth Heaven.

Wu Yuan stood before the floor-to-ceiling window on the ninth floor of the Void Pavilion, holding a cup of Enlightenment Tea brewed with ancient spiritual spring water. The fragrant aroma of the tea coalesced into a blurry image before him.

The image depicted the dark red sands and scattered bones of the Fallen God Wasteland, with spatial energy twisting and fluctuating within it, occasionally flashing with streaks of purple light. "President, Vice President Su has already set off."

His trusted attendant stood three steps behind him, reporting respectfully, "She brought the Chamber of Commerce's finest disguise artifact, 'Thousand Faces,' which can freely alter one's appearance, aura, and even cultivation fluctuations. If she so desires, even a fifth-grade Golden Immortal cannot see through her disguise."

Wu Yuan nodded, taking a sip of his Enlightenment Tea. "What's the situation at the Flame God Palace?" "

Yan Wuji dispatched three elders—Yan Po, Yan Hu, and Yan Bao—leading three teams of the Flame Dragon Guard to the Fallen God Wasteland. They are all at the peak of the third grade Golden Immortal realm; their lineup is very strong."

"Very strong?"

Wu Yuan smiled, a shrewdness characteristic of a businessman. "Indeed very strong. But no matter how strong they are, they are nothing more than three slightly stronger ants before the power of chaos.

That kid named Kai, at the eighth grade True Immortal realm, can kill a peak third-grade Golden Immortal with a single sword strike. Once he reaches the Golden Immortal realm, won't he be able to challenge beings of even higher realms?"

His fingers tapped lightly on his teacup, producing a crisp tinkling sound.

"Tell Su Jingqiu not to rush. Let the people from the Flame God Palace fight Kai first, and let her observe from the shadows. Once both sides are nearly exhausted, she can step in. Not as a member of the Void Merchant Guild, but as… a rogue cultivator lost in the Fallen God Wasteland."

He paused. "By the way, tell her to take that thing with her."

The trusted attendant was taken aback. "The Guild Master means… the Ancient Teleportation Jade Talisman?"

"The Fallen God Wasteland is riddled with spatial rifts; even a fifth-grade Golden Immortal wouldn't dare to tear through space casually. If she encounters danger, without that thing, she won't even be able to escape."

Wu Yuan turned around, his crimson-gold eyes gleaming in the dim tower. "I can't bear to see Vice Guild Master Su perish in such a place. She's my most valuable pawn, worth more than ten third-grade Golden Immortals."

The trusted attendant acknowledged the order and withdrew.

Wu Yuan turned back to the French windows, gazing at the vast sea of clouds outside and the expansive Eighteen Heavens below.

His gaze swept past the Flame God Palace, landing on the floating altar of the Bright Hall in the distance, then on the faintly visible Daoist palace deep within the Azure Cloud Mountains, finally settling on the dark red deathly wasteland of the Fallen God Wasteland.

"The Great Luo Golden

Scripture," he murmured, his voice tinged with an almost devout greed. "The supreme inheritance of the Daoist sect, lost for hundreds of thousands of years, something the entire universe has been searching for, has actually fallen into the hands of a mere True Immortal. What kind of luck is this? Or… is this a deliberate arrangement by those old fogies of the Daoist sect?"

He shook his head, dismissing the thought.

Regardless of whether it was the Daoist sect's arrangement, since the Great Luo Golden Scripture had appeared on his territory, there was no reason to let it go.

As for Kai?

A True Immortal youth, possessing a great treasure, venturing alone into the Eighteenth Heaven.

In Wu Yuan's eyes, he wasn't a person; he was a piece of fat meat, a piece of fat meat coated in honey, and he only needed to patiently wait for the honey to melt before swallowing him whole.

…

Azure Cloud Mountains, Azure Cloud Cave Heaven of the Daoist sect.

Unlike the grandeur of the Flame God Palace and the secrecy of the Void Merchant Guild, the Daoist Azure Cloud Cave Heaven is hidden deep within the Azure Cloud Mountains, concealed by an ancient array. From the outside, it appears as nothing more than endless green hills and clear waters, showing no signs of anything unusual.

But the moment one steps into the array, the world transforms abruptly. The green hills and clear waters

vanish, replaced by a vast, boundless paradise of immortals.

Spiritual peaks, like swords, pierce the clouds, with waterfalls cascading from their summits, their roars like thunder.

Spiritual springs gurgle, converging into lakes where cranes dance and spirit turtles swim leisurely.

Ancient pines stand strong, entwined with vines, and spiritual herbs and mushrooms grow everywhere, their multicolored spiritual light flowing among the branches and leaves.

The air is filled with a dense, almost liquefied, spiritual energy of heaven and earth, and with every breath, one can feel their cultivation increasing at a visible speed.

This is the Azure Cloud Cave Heaven, a power belonging to the Daoist sect.

Unlike the magnificent exterior, the Enlightenment Cliff deep within the Azure Cloud Cave Heaven is utterly silent.

Enlightenment Cliff is the highest precipice in Qingyun Cave Heaven. Its summit is only a few dozen feet in diameter, barren and devoid of vegetation, with only a single, azure boulder standing at its edge. Seated

cross-legged on this boulder is an old Taoist priest with white hair and beard, his face serene, eyes slightly closed, and no trace of spiritual energy emanating from him. He appears like an ordinary old man.

Yet, anyone who cultivates Taoist techniques, upon approaching within a hundred feet of him, will feel a pressure emanating from the depths of their soul.

This pressure is not an overwhelming superiority in cultivation level, but a suppression of the Taoist hierarchy, like a novice Taoist standing before a Taoist patriarch, filled with the awe of a lineage originating from its source.

He is Jade Void True Man, the head of Qingyun Cave Heaven, a fifth-grade Golden Immortal.

In the Eighteenth Heaven, this cultivation level is enough to make one look down upon everything.

But he has not left Enlightenment Cliff for tens of thousands of years, not because he cannot, but because he is waiting.

Waiting for a sign, waiting for a person, waiting for the return of a lineage.

At this moment, he suddenly opens his eyes.

Those eyes were so clear they didn't seem like those of an old man who had lived for tens of thousands of years. There was no weariness, no cloudiness, only a clarity that saw through the essence of all things.

"They've arrived,"

he murmured, his voice soft yet carrying throughout the entire Qingyun Cave Heaven.

In an instant, several streams of light shot in from all directions of Qingyun Cave Heaven, landing at the foot of the Enlightenment Cliff.

Leading them was a middle-aged Taoist priest, with a handsome face, three long wisps of beard, wearing a blue Taoist robe, and an ancient sword hanging at his waist, its scabbard engraved with the words "Tai Xu."

He was Qing Xuanzi, the Grand Elder of Qingyun Cave Heaven, a fourth-grade Golden Immortal, second only to Jade Void True Man in the Taoist sect.

Behind Qing Xuanzi stood more than a dozen Taoist priests, all with cultivation levels above the Golden Immortal realm, their eyes filled with

undisguised excitement and anticipation. “Master Uncle,” Qing Xuanzi bowed respectfully, his voice trembling slightly, “You sensed it?”

“The Great Luo Golden Scripture.”

Yu Xu Zhenren’s voice was calm as still water, yet it made everyone present’s hearts skip a beat. “I sensed its aura. It’s in the Fallen God Wasteland, on a young man.”

The Fallen God Wasteland.

This name silenced the people below the Enlightenment Cliff for a moment.

It was the site of the ancient war of the gods, where countless Golden Immortals had perished tens of thousands of years ago. The lingering killing intent and resentment still lingered, and spatial rifts covered the entire wasteland, threatening to awaken the slumbering ancient souls at any moment.

It was one of the most dangerous forbidden areas of the Eighteen Heavens, where even a fourth-grade Golden Immortal dared not venture too far.

And the aura of the Great Luo Golden Scripture was in the center of that deathly place.

“Grand Elder…” At this moment, a disciple whispered a few words in Qing Xuanzi’s ear.

Qing Xuanzi frowned, his expression changing slightly.

“What’s wrong?” Yu Xu Zhenren asked.

“Master Uncle, both the Flame God Palace and the Void Merchant Guild have sent people to the Fallen God Wasteland, most likely for the Great Luo Golden Scripture,” Qing Xuanzi said.

“The Great Luo Golden Scripture is a Daoist inheritance, so it’s normal for other forces to be eyeing it,” Yu Xu Zhenren nodded.

“Master Uncle,” Qing Xuanzi hesitated, “The Fallen God Wasteland is too dangerous. Why don’t I lead people there and bring back that boy?”

“No.”

Yu Xu Zhenren shook his head, a rare solemnity appearing on his usually calm face. “You can’t go. None of you can go. If you all mobilize in large numbers, and so many forces clash head-on in the Fallen God Wasteland, it won’t just be a matter of fighting for the inheritance, but the first major war between forces in the Eighteen Heavens in tens of thousands of years.”

He paused, his gaze sweeping over the crowd below the cliff, finally settling on a young Daoist standing at the very back.

The Daoist looked to be no more than twenty years old, with delicate features and a composure beyond his years.

Dressed in a plain Taoist robe, with a sheathless wooden sword hanging at his waist, the sword showed no spiritual energy fluctuations and looked like an ordinary piece of peach wood.

However, upon closer inspection, one could see that the wood grain subtly formed ancient Taoist patterns—the long-lost “Heavenly Wood Sword,” crafted from ten-thousand-year-old lightning-struck peach wood, nurtured with Taoist techniques for a thousand years to become a finished product.

This was Yun Yi, the most outstanding disciple of this generation in the Taoist sect, a second-grade Golden Immortal.

“Yun Yi,”

Jade Void Master’s voice softened, “Come here.”

Yun Yi stepped out from the crowd, ascended the Enlightenment Cliff, and stopped three steps in front of Jade Void Master, bowing respectfully.

He didn't speak, simply waiting quietly.

Jade Void Master scrutinized him, a hint of satisfaction flashing in his eyes.

He had watched this child grow up, cultivating from a mere Taoist novice to a second-grade Golden Immortal in less than three thousand years.

In the Taoist sect, this speed wasn't the fastest, but his solid foundation and unwavering Taoist heart were the most outstanding of this generation.

More importantly, he was taciturn, meticulous, and never did anything without certainty.

"Go to the Fallen God Wasteland and find the young man who possesses the Great Luo Golden Scripture."

Master Yuxu's voice was soft, each word clearly reaching Yun Yi's ears. "Don't be his enemy, and don't deliberately approach him. The Great Luo Golden Scripture chose him; it's fate. You only need to... appear by his side when he needs help."

Yun Yi raised his head, looking into Master Yuxu's eyes.

In those clear eyes, there was an emotion he had never seen before.

Not expectation, not worry, but a near-fatal certainty.

As if everything was predetermined, from the moment the Great Luo Golden Scripture was lost hundreds of thousands of years ago, from the moment that young man was born, from the moment they stood here talking, it was all destined.

“Disciple understands.” Yun Yi’s voice was soft, yet carried an undeniable firmness.

He turned and walked down the Enlightenment Cliff, his plain Daoist robe fluttering gently in the wind, his wooden sword swaying softly at his waist, making a faint clinking sound.

The people below watched him go, no one speaking.

Qing Xuanzi watched Yun Yi’s figure disappear at the exit of Qingyun Cave Heaven, and finally couldn’t help but speak: “Master Uncle, you only sent Yun Yi alone? In a place like the Fallen God Wasteland, although Yun Yi’s cultivation is not bad, he is only at the second level of the Golden Immortal Realm. What if…”

“There is no ‘what if’.”

True Man Yuxu closed his eyes again, his voice as calm as a still pond. “No matter how many people the Flame God Palace sends, they can’t hurt that young man. No matter how deep the Void Merchant Guild’s conspiracy is, it can’t reach him. The people they sent are just stones for him to sharpen his blade.”

He paused, and the corners of his mouth slightly curved into an almost imperceptible smile.

“As for that young man, now that he has reached the Eighteenth Heaven, it’s time to temper the Flame God Palace’s arrogance. The Fire God lineage has dominated the Eighteenth Heaven for too long, so long that they have forgotten that this world is not just about fire.”

Silence returned to Wudao Cliff.

Only the whistling of the wind blowing through the blue stones on the cliff edge and the faint sound of water from the distant Lingfeng Waterfall remained.

…

In the Fallen God Wasteland, amidst the dark red sand, Kai stopped.

Unaware that he was being watched by several forces the moment he landed on the eighteenth level of the Heavenly Realm, he was targeted.

He took out a pill from his storage ring and swallowed it. The pill entered his stomach, and spiritual energy circulated through his meridians, replenishing the chaotic energy he had consumed during his journey.

The dark red wasteland stretched endlessly before him, the rays of the three blazing suns casting long shadows of him and Jiang Xuelan, leaving two twisted black streaks on the sand.

He had been walking across this wasteland for several hours, passing countless skeletons and battle ruins, his divine sense maintaining maximum coverage, not escaping the notice of any disturbance.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside him, her silver-white longsword already drawn three inches from its sheath, a faint cold light emanating from its blade.

Her divine sense wasn't as powerful as Kai's, but the perception of the Ice God lineage allowed her to vaguely sense something.

"Someone is tracking us," she said softly, her gaze fixed on a direction deep within the wasteland.

"Hmm,"

Kai nodded, his purple eyes reflecting several rapidly moving golden dots on the distant horizon. "Three peak third-grade Golden Immortals, leading thirty first-grade Golden Immortals. They're still eight hundred li away from us. At their speed, they'll catch up in less than an incense stick's time."

His tone was calm; he had actually sensed it long ago.

However, these people weren't very strong, so Kai didn't care.

Jiang Xuelan turned to look at him, her white robes standing out starkly against the dark red wasteland.

There was no fear in her eyes, only a hint of helplessness, and a slight smile appeared on her lips: “Another Golden Immortal Realm Third Grade?” “Three this time.”

Kai drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword, purple chaotic fire slowly burning on its blade, distorting the surrounding air.

“Two last time, three this time.” Jiang Xuelan also drew her longsword, its silver blade gleaming coldly. “The people of the Divine Race are truly generous.”

“Not generous, but arrogant.”

Kai’s gaze passed over the approaching golden lights, landing on a distorted space further away.

The spiritual energy fluctuations in that space were different from the surroundings, faintly forming a semi-transparent vortex, with something shimmering with a faint golden light at its center.

“Someone is observing us from the shadows over there,”

he whispered. “Not highly cultivated, third-grade Golden Immortal, but carrying some kind of magical artifact that can shield them from divine sense. Not a member of the Divine Race, nor a member of the Daoist sect.”

Jiang Xuelan followed his gaze but saw nothing.

But she trusted Kai’s judgment.

“Should we deal with her?”

“No rush.” Kai withdrew his gaze and refocused on the golden lights that had closed to within three hundred miles. “Take care of these first.”

Three hundred miles.

Two hundred miles.

One hundred miles.

The golden lights grew larger and clearer, revealing three figures in front and thirty slightly smaller figures behind. Each figure was engulfed in golden holy flames, resembling thirty-three falling meteors against the dark red wasteland.

The leading figure was the largest, his body like a moving iron tower. The holy flames on his body solidified into a solid armor, its surface swirling with dense war runes.

He stopped thirty miles from Kai, and the thirty-two golden lights behind him stopped simultaneously, forming a fan-shaped battle formation in the air, blocking all of Kai and Jiang Xuelan's escape routes.

Thirty miles.

For a Golden Immortal cultivator, this distance was no different from being face-to-face.

Yan Po looked down at the two teenagers on the dark red sand, a hint of contempt flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

Eighth and ninth rank True Immortals.

These two ants had killed Yan Lie and severed Yan Wu's arm?

"You're Kai?" His voice, like muffled thunder, echoed across the wasteland.

Kai raised his head, his purple eyes meeting Yan Po's crimson-gold gaze.

He didn't speak, only slightly raising his chin in response.

Yan Po frowned.

He had seen many arrogant young people, but none dared to face him with such an attitude.

Even a first-rank Golden Immortal had to treat him with utmost respect; what right did a mere eighth-rank True Immortal have?

“The Palace Master has ordered,” Yan Po’s voice held a hint of impatience, “that we see you alive or dead. Will you come with us, or will we take action?”

Kai remained silent.

He simply held the Dragon-Slaying Sword horizontally in front of him, and the purple chaotic fire on its blade suddenly surged higher, the flames hissing as they burned the surrounding holy light.

Yan Po’s pupils contracted sharply.

He felt it—the power that was completely opposed to, even restrained, the holy light.

Chaotic power.

Not a legend, not some unorthodox method, but genuine chaotic power.

“Attack!”

Yan Po didn’t waste any more words, his figure shooting out, a halberd burning with golden holy fire materializing in his hand, the halberd slashing down at Kai with enough power to split a mountain.

Yan Hu and Yan Bao attacked simultaneously from the left and right flanks. Yan Hu wielded twin blades, the blades flowing with dark red flames—the “torture fire” specially used by the Hall of Punishments to interrogate prisoners, burning not only the flesh but also the soul.

Yan Bao silently circled around to Kai's back, wielding a slender rapier. The blade was devoid of flame, only a thin layer of silver light emanating from it—a "Spirit-Breaking Thorn" specifically designed to break through protective spiritual energy.

Thirty Flame Dragon Guards simultaneously dispersed, forming a massive encirclement in the air. Each held a standard-issue flaming longsword, the sacred flames on their blades merging together to form a fiery cage descending from the sky.

Kai moved.

He didn't dodge, didn't retreat, and didn't even parry. His

Dragon-Slaying Sword swung upwards, its purple sword energy arcing through the air, colliding head-on with Yan Po's golden halberd.

Boom!

A shockwave even more powerful than the one before the Ten Thousand Demon Ridge gates spread outwards, hurling dark red sand and dust from dozens of miles around into the air, revealing deep brown rocks beneath.

The rocks were etched with ancient battle marks, left by ancient powerhouses tens of thousands of years ago, still untouched by the wind and sand.

Yan Po was sent flying dozens of feet backward by the shockwave. His arms were numb, his tiger's mouth split open, and golden blood seeped from the wounds, dripping onto the dark red sand.

His eyes were wide open, his face filled with disbelief.

His cultivation was more than one level higher than Yan Lie's, and the battle halberd in his hand was an ancient magic weapon inherited from the Fire God lineage. How could he have been repelled by a mere eighth-grade True Immortal with a single sword strike?

What kind of power was this?

Kai didn't give him time to think.

The second sword strike had already come.

This sword strike was no longer a passive block, but an active attack.

The purple chaotic fire on the Dragon-Slaying Sword condensed into a hundred-foot-long sword aura. Wherever the sword aura passed, the holy light and flames seemed to have encountered a natural enemy, automatically dodging to the sides.

Even the war runes on Yan Po's body began to flicker, as if warning their master that the threat before them had exceeded the runes' tolerance.

Yan Po gritted his teeth, and the holy light within his body erupted with all its might. The golden flames on the battle halberd suddenly shot up, condensing into a hexagonal holy light shield in front of him.

An ancient phantom of the Fire God appeared on the shield, its eyes crimson, spewing forth a stream of golden divine fire that merged with the shield.

This move was the Fire God lineage's life-saving technique, the "Divine Fire Shield," said to be able to withstand even the full-force attack of a fourth-grade Golden Immortal.

However, when Kai's sword aura struck the Divine Fire Shield, the ancient Fire God phantom on the shield let out a shrill scream. The golden divine fire, as if encountering its nemesis in the face of chaotic fire, was instantly devoured.

The shield shattered.

The sword aura, undiminished in its momentum, headed straight for Yan Po's chest.

At the critical moment, Yan Hu's twin blades slashed from the side, the dark red Fiery Blade clashing with the purple sword aura, producing a piercing metallic scraping sound.

Yan Bao's Spirit-Piercing Thorn silently pierced towards the back of Kai's neck, its silver light almost invisible amidst the purple radiance of the sword aura.

Kai slightly shifted his body, the Spirit-Piercing Thorn grazing his ear and lifting a strand of black hair.

He struck out with his left palm, chaotic power condensing into a fist-sized purple orb in his palm. The orb shot out and slammed into Yan Bao's chest.

Yan Bao groaned, blasted hundreds of feet away, crashing into a pile of bones, sending up clouds of ashes and sand.

A fist-sized crater appeared in his chest, golden blood oozing from the corner of his mouth, and his chest armor completely shattered, revealing the charred flesh beneath, burned black by the chaotic power. At the same time, Kai's sword flashed, slashing at Yan Hu.

Yan Hu crossed his twin blades in front of him, dark red flames of punishment burning wildly on the blades, attempting to resist the erosion of the chaotic power.

But the chaotic fire directly devoured the flames of punishment, burning through the twin blades, charring Yan Hu's hands black, and finally leaving a deep, bone-revealing sword wound on his chest.

Yan Hu screamed and flew backward, landing next to Yan Bao, golden blood gushing uncontrollably from the gaping wound in his chest.

The fiery cage of thirty Yan Long Guards finally descended, and golden holy fire pressed down on Kai from all directions.

Kai raised his head, his purple eyes reflecting the golden flames filling the sky.

He took a deep breath, raising the Dragon Slayer Sword high above his head, the purple chaotic fire on the blade exploding violently, transforming into concentric purple ripples spreading outward.

Wherever the ripples passed, the golden holy fire extinguished layer by layer, like candle flames blown out by a gale.

Thirty Flame Dragon Guards simultaneously coughed up blood, sent flying backward by the backlash of spiritual energy, their flaming longswords shattering into countless golden fragments.

From the moment Yan Po gave the order to attack to the complete annihilation of the Flame Dragon Guards, less than ten breaths had passed.

Yan Po stood rooted to the spot, looking at the Flame Dragon Guards howling in agony, at the Flame Tiger with its gaping wound in its chest, at the Flame Leopard with its sunken chest, his hand gripping his halberd trembling.

Not from fear, but from rage.

The Flame God Palace's hundreds of thousands of years of prestige, the peak cultivation of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, thirty elites of the first rank of the Golden Immortal Realm—all were like paper before this youth of the eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm.

He roared, burning his essence blood, holy light surging wildly within his body, forcibly pushing his cultivation to the threshold of the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal Realm.

The golden flames on his halberd turned blazing white, the color that only appears when holy light is compressed to its extreme, the temperature so high that even the air seemed to ignite, and the space within a hundred feet began to distort and deform.

“Die!”

The halberd, carrying a power capable of destroying the heavens and earth, thrust towards Kai. A blinding white holy light condensed at the halberd’s tip into a thin, hair-like beam—the strongest strike, compressing all power into a single point.

Kai raised his Dragon-Slaying Sword, its tip aimed at the incoming halberd.

He didn’t dodge, didn’t gather strength, and didn’t even mobilize more chaotic power.

He simply thrust out a single sword strike.

The sword tip collided with the halberd tip.

In that instant, the spatial laws within a hundred miles trembled violently. The ancient remnants of souls deep within the Fallen God Wasteland simultaneously let out a low sigh, as if awakened from their slumber by the power of this sword strike.

Then, all fell silent.

Yan Po lowered his head, looking at his chest.

The tip of the Dragon-Slaying Sword pierced through his chest and emerged from his back. Purple chaotic fire burned within his body, devouring his holy light, essence blood, meridians, and bones, one by one.

He didn’t even feel pain, only a chill surging from the depths of his bone marrow—the aura of death.

“You…”

He tried to say something, but the chaotic fire had already consumed his throat, leaving only silent mouth movements.

Kai drew the Dragon-Slaying Sword, and Yan Po's body slowly fell, crashing onto the dark red sand, splashing a cloud of golden blood mist.

His crimson-gold eyes remained open until death, frozen in disbelief.

Yan Hu and Yan Bao struggled to get up and escape, but their injuries were too severe. The sword wound on Yan Hu's chest was still bleeding, and the dent in Yan Bao's chest made every breath feel like torture.

Kai walked up to them, looking down at them.

"Go back and tell your so-called Palace Master," his voice was calm, devoid of any emotion, "that the Eighteen Heavens are not his territory. Here, I call the shots."

Although Kai had just arrived at the Eighteen Heavens and didn't yet know the extent of its power,

he was confident that with his arrival, the Eighteen Heavens belonged to him.

Yan Hu and Yan Bao exchanged a glance, a complex expression flashing in their eyes.

They didn't speak, helping each other to their feet, and staggered towards the edge of the wasteland.

Behind him, the corpses of thirty Flame Dragon Guards lay scattered on the dark red sand, their golden blood seeping into the soil, staining that small patch of land a dark gold.

Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword and turned his gaze to the distorted space deep within the wasteland.

The golden light in that space had vanished; the person who had been secretly observing had left the instant the battle ended, leaving cleanly and swiftly without a trace.

But Kai remembered that person's aura—an aura that didn't belong to the gods, nor to the Daoist sects, but possessed an indescribable…merchant's scent.

"The Void Merchant Guild," Kai murmured, his brow furrowing slightly.

Jiang Xuelan walked to his side. "How did you know?"

"I guessed."

Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword. "The president of the Void Merchant Guild in the Seventeenth Heaven is very interested in the Great Luo Golden Scripture. I have what he wants, and he won't let this opportunity pass him by."

He paused, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes. "However, he's smarter than the Heavenly Venerable. He knows that force won't work, so he wants to try a different approach. First, observe; then make contact; then gain trust; and finally…" He didn't finish his sentence.

In the Seventeenth Heaven, Kai didn't attack Wu Heng not out of disdain or fear.

He knew that the Void Merchant Guild was a powerful force in many heavens, and Kai simply didn't want to create another enemy, perhaps for the future when he might need the Void Merchant Guild.

That's why he let Wu Heng go.

But now, it's clear that the Void Merchant Guild in the Eighteenth Heaven knows of his arrival; it must have been Wu Heng who sent the message.

Jiang Xuelan understood at this moment.

"Then what do we do?" Jiang Xuelan asked.

"Wait."

Kai turned and continued walking out of the wasteland. “Wait for the people he sent to come to me. Since he wants to be my friend, I’ll give him a chance. As for who schemes against whom in the end…”

He didn’t finish his sentence, but the cold smile on his lips said it all. At the edge of the Fallen God Wasteland, the dark red sand began to thin, and gray-brown rocks and scattered withered grass gradually appeared on the ground.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan had walked for a whole day. Behind them, the wasteland had turned into a dark red line on the horizon, while ahead, the outline of a city was faintly visible in the twilight.

The city was not large, with walls built of black volcanic rock, about ten zhang high. Every hundred zhang along the walls was an arrow tower, its tops burning with dim yellow lights.

Above the city gate were three ancient characters—Fire Crow City.

There weren’t many cultivators entering or leaving the city gate; most were dressed as rogue cultivators, wearing robes of various colors, with low-grade magic artifacts and storage bags hanging from their waists.

Their cultivation levels were generally below the True Immortal Realm. Occasionally, one could see one or two True Immortal Realm first or second grade cultivators passing by, who were already the highest-ranking beings in the city.

“Fire Crow City.” Jiang Xuelan uttered the name of the city gate, her gaze sweeping over the city wall. “The name is interesting.”

“It’s the territory of the Fire God lineage, so it’s normal to name it after fire.” Kai glanced at the guards at the city gate; they were just a few True Immortal Realm cultivators, not even at the Golden Immortal Realm, posing no threat to him. Just

as he was about to step into the city, a woman’s voice suddenly came from behind him.

“Mr. Chen, please wait.”

The voice wasn’t loud, but it was clear and distinct, with a perfect sense of proportion, neither abrupt nor deliberate.

Kai stopped, not turning around immediately.

His divine sense had already locked onto the source of the voice. Thirty feet behind him, a woman in a light gray dress was walking from the direction of the Fallen God Wasteland.

She walked at a moderate pace, her steps light, the hem of her dress leaving shallow marks on the dark red sand.

Her face was beautiful, without makeup, her long hair casually tied up with a wooden hairpin, a few strands fluttering gently in the wind.

She appeared simple and clean, like an ordinary female cultivator who, despite her long journey through the Great Wilderness, remained dignified despite her travel-worn appearance.

However, Kai’s purple eyes lingered on her for a moment before he noticed something amiss.

Her cultivation level fluctuated around the first rank of the Golden Immortal realm—neither too high nor too low, just enough to walk on the edge of the Fallen God Wasteland without attracting too much attention.

But the fluctuations were too stable, almost artificially controlled; the amplitude of her spiritual energy fluctuations was exactly the same with every breath, something almost impossible for a true cultivator.

More importantly, her aura was exactly the same as the “merchant’s scent” he had sensed at the end of the battle.

It was the same person who had been secretly observing from the distorted space.

Su Jingqiu walked up to Kai and stopped five steps away.

This distance was subtle, neither offensive nor distant.

She didn't rush to speak but instead bent down and gently placed a storage bag on the ground beside Kai's feet.

The movement was natural, like placing a casually carried bundle by the roadside.

"The Void Merchant Guild wishes to befriend Mr. Chen. This is a small gift."

She spoke simply, her tone flat, without any unnecessary formalities or flattery. After speaking, she straightened up, nodded slightly to Kai, and then turned to leave.

From beginning to end, she left no name, no contact information, and didn't even glance at Kai.

She came suddenly and left decisively.

Jiang Xuelan watched her departing figure, her brows furrowing slightly: "She just left like that?"

"Yes." Kai bent down and picked up the storage bag.

The storage bag was the most ordinary kind, a grayish-white cloth bag without any markings, the kind you could buy from a street vendor for a few low-grade spirit stones.

But the contents of the bag were anything but ordinary.

The moment his divine sense probed into it, Kai's pupils contracted slightly.

Inside the storage bag lay a jade slip and a silver-white token.

The jade slip was pure white, its surface shimmering with a faint spiritual light; it was clearly a high-grade recording jade slip.

He probed the jade slip with his divine sense, and a huge map unfolded in his mind.

The map's level of detail far exceeded his expectations.

Centered on the Fallen God Wasteland, the map radiated outwards in all directions, covering the entire Eighteen Heavens.

Mountains, rivers, cities, sects, spiritual veins, mines, forbidden areas, and secret realms—everything was clearly marked.

The Flame God Palace was in the southwest, with the locations of its nine golden pagodas pinpointed to their height and defensive range.

The Hall of Light was in the southeast, with the coordinates of the floating altar marked below it with "Holy Light Restriction, those below the fifth rank of Golden Immortal should not approach."

The Void Merchant Guild's Heavenly City was in the far north, and the map marked the distribution of the thirty-six floating islands surrounding the city and the teleportation array nodes between them.

The Azure Cloud Cave Heaven was deep within the Azure Cloud Mountains in the northeast; its exact location wasn't marked on the map, only described in small print as "Daoist Sect's stronghold, concealed by a great array, exact location unknown."

In addition, the locations, territories, and cultivation levels of the main experts of dozens of smaller forces were also listed.

There was even a map showing the distribution of spatial rifts within the Fallen God Wasteland, with the location, size, and activity cycle of each rift marked in extreme detail. Some places even had notes—"This rift connects to the slumbering place of ancient remnant souls; approaching is risky."

The value of this map was immeasurable in spirit stones.

The maps of the Eighteen Heavens available on the market at most marked the approximate locations of a few major sects, with an accuracy many times worse.

This map, however, was as if it laid bare the entire Eighteen Heavens' trump cards before Kai.

Beyond the jade slip was the silver-white token.

The token was palm-sized, with a treasure ship traversing the void engraved on the front, its lines smooth, its sails billowing, as if it might sail out of the token at any moment.

On the back was the mark of the Void Merchant Guild—a vortex composed of nine arcs, with the ancient character "虛" (Void) at its center.

A faint silver light shimmered on the token's surface. Kai could sense an extremely subtle spatial law within it, connected to a certain array of the Void Merchant Guild. The token's holder could activate it in a crisis, instantly teleporting them back to the guild's safe zone.

This was a guest elder token of the Void Merchant Guild.

Moreover, judging from the token's material and the complexity of its runes, its grade was quite high, at least second only to the guild leader.

Kai flipped the token in his palm, remaining silent for a moment.

Jiang Xuelan leaned closer for a glance, a hint of surprise flashing in her eyes: "A guest elder token of the Void Merchant Guild? They want to recruit you?"

"Not recruit." Kai put the token and jade slip back into his storage bag, tying it to his waist. "It's a long-term strategy to catch a big fish."

“What do you mean?”

“A map, a token, nothing else asked, not even a name. This gift is so clean, so pure, that it feels wrong not to accept it.”

Kai looked up at the direction Su Jingqiu had left in; her greyish-blue figure had already disappeared into the twilight of the Fallen God Wasteland. “Accepting the gift means owing a favor. And favors must be repaid sooner or later.”

“Then why are you still accepting it?”

“The map is something I need. The token…” Kai paused, “I’ll keep it for now, whether I need it or not is another matter.”

He turned and walked towards Fire Raven City, Jiang Xuelan beside him. As soon as the two entered the city gate, the bustling atmosphere of the city hit them.

Fire Crow City wasn’t large, but it was very lively.

Stalls lined both sides of the streets, selling magical artifacts, elixirs, spiritual materials, and monster beast materials, their shouts rising and falling.

Pedestrians thronged shoulder to shoulder, mostly independent cultivators; occasionally, a few sect disciples in uniform robes would walk by, and the surrounding vendors and cultivators would automatically make way.

The most conspicuous building in the city was a three-story stone tower in the center, with a flag atop it embroidered with a three-legged golden crow engulfed in flames—the symbol of the Fire God lineage.

The tower’s doors were open, and the sounds of noisy conversation and the aroma of wine and meat wafted from within—it was a tavern.

Kai didn't enter the stone tower in the city center, but instead found a secluded little inn to stay in.

The inn was small, only two stories high; the first floor was a simple dining hall, and the second floor had several guest rooms. The innkeeper was an elderly cultivator at the ninth rank of the True Immortal Realm, with gray hair and a slightly hunched back. A flicker of wariness crossed his eyes when he saw two strangers enter, but he quickly replaced it with a businessman's smile.

"Gentlemen, would you like to stay or eat?"

"Stay. Two rooms." Kai placed a few spirit stones on the counter.

The elderly cultivator accepted the spirit stones and handed over two wooden keys with a smile. "The two innermost rooms on the second floor are quiet and undisturbed."

Kai took the keys and casually asked before going upstairs, "Has anything happened in the city lately?"

The elderly cultivator's smile froze for a moment. He looked around and lowered his voice, "Sir, you must be from out of town. Fire Raven City has been rather unsettled lately. A few days ago, the Flame God Palace sent people to collect taxes and took away most of the spiritual materials from several shops.

Yesterday, another group came, not from the Flame God Palace, but wearing white robes. I heard they're from the Hall of Light, saying they want to set up a missionary point here. The two groups almost got into a fight at the city gate."

He paused, lowering his voice even further, "Sir, please be careful. There have been quite a few unfamiliar faces in the city recently. I wonder who they are."

Kai nodded and went upstairs.

The guest room was small and simply furnished: a wooden bed, a wooden table, a wooden chair, and a dusty futon in the corner.

But for someone who had spent a whole day wandering through the Fallen God Wasteland, it was enough.

Kai closed the door, sat cross-legged on the futon, and took out the map jade slip from his storage bag again. He probed it with his divine sense and examined it carefully once more.

This time, he looked even more closely, his gaze lingering on every corner of the map, memorizing every mark.

His gaze lingered for a moment on the locations of the Flame God Palace and the Hall of Light, then swept over the approximate locations of the Void Merchant Guild's Heavenly City and the Azure Cloud Cave, finally settling on a place that made him frown slightly.

In the northeast corner of the map, further north of the Azure Cloud Mountains, there was an area marked "Northern Netherworld Cold Abyss."

The area wasn't marked in detail on the map, only described in a few lines of red text:

"Extremely Cold Forbidden Land, perpetually frozen, with temperatures so low that even Golden Immortal cultivators cannot stay there for long."

"Extremely unstable space; teleportation arrays cannot locate it, and flying artifacts cannot approach."

"Site of the ancient Ice God lineage, suspected to contain remnants of the Ice God's legacy."

"Danger Level: Unknown."

Kai's gaze lingered on these lines for a long time.

The Ice God lineage.

The remnant soul of the Ice God lineage's ancestor still slumbered in his sea of consciousness.

And this "Northern Netherworld Cold Abyss" in the Eighteenth Heaven, marked "Site of the Ancient Ice God Lineage," indicated that the Ice God lineage once had a stronghold in the Eighteenth Heaven. He

just didn't know if any members of the Ice God lineage remained there.

Kai put away the map jade slip, got up, and left his guest room, knocking on Jiang Xuelan's door next door.

The door opened quickly, and Jiang Xuelan had changed into clean white clothes, her long hair tied back up, holding a cup of hot tea.

"What's wrong?" She noticed the strange expression on Kai's face.

Kai handed her the jade slip with a map. "Take a look at this."

Jiang Xuelan took the jade slip, probed it with her divine sense, and after a moment, looked up, a hint of surprise flashing in her eyes: "The Northern Abyss? The ruins of the Ice God lineage?"

"You know this place?"

Jiang Xuelan shook her head. "No. Although I am a descendant of the Ice God lineage, I don't know about the ruins of a place like the Eighteenth Heaven."

She paused. "You want to go?"

Kai was about to speak when a frail and aged voice suddenly echoed in his mind.

"The Northern Abyss…"

The voice was very soft, as if it came from a very distant place, carrying a weariness born of many vicissitudes.

It was the Northern Abyss, the remnant soul of the Ice God lineage's ancestor.

"Senior?" Kai responded in his mind.

"That place… was once a branch altar of the Ice God lineage in the Eighteenth Heaven."

Bei Mingyuan's voice was intermittent, as if he was trying hard to recall. "The Ice God lineage used to have influence in every heaven, and was incredibly prosperous, highly revered among the gods. I once stayed in the Northern Cold Abyss for a time, but alas… alas, the Ice God lineage now…"

His voice carried an undisguised pain.

"Is the Ice God's legacy still there?" Kai asked.

Bei Mingyuan was silent for a long time.

So long that Kai thought he had fallen into a deep sleep again.

Then his voice rang out again, even weaker than before: "I don't know. So many years have passed, who could know…"

He paused, "However… I sensed a trace of the Ice God lineage's bloodline deep within the Northern Cold Abyss. Very faint, as if… there are still clansmen alive."

Kai's heart trembled.

There are still clansmen alive?

"Are you sure, Senior?"

“Not sure.”

Bei Mingyuan’s voice grew softer and softer, as if he were speaking with his last breath. “That aura was too faint. It could be an illusion, a remnant soul, or even… a seal. But in any case, there must be something of the Ice God lineage there. Otherwise, my remnant soul wouldn’t have sensed it.”

After saying this, Bei Mingyuan’s voice completely disappeared, and his sea of consciousness fell silent again.

Kai opened his eyes and looked at Jiang Xuelan.

Jiang Xuelan was staring at him, her eyes questioning.

“Senior Bei Mingyuan said,” Kai repeated Bei Mingyuan’s words, “that there is still a trace of the Ice God lineage’s bloodline aura deep within the Bei Ming Cold Abyss, and some members of the clan may still be alive.”

Jiang Xuelan’s hand trembled slightly, the teacup in her hand shook, and a few drops of tea splashed onto the back of her hand.

She didn’t speak, but Kai could see the turmoil in her eyes.

Of the Ice God lineage in the seventeenth heaven, only the branch of the Divine Abyss Pavilion remained, along with the lineage of the Profound Ice Venerable, totaling only a few hundred people.

If any members of the lineage were still alive in the eighteenth heaven, it would be of great significance to the Ice God lineage.

“The map says the Northern Netherworld Abyss is an extremely cold forbidden land, even Golden Immortals find it difficult to stay for long,”

Kai said thoughtfully. “But we have the bloodline and cultivation techniques of the Ice God lineage, so we should be able to withstand it. Whether we go or not is your decision.”

Jiang Xuelan lowered her head, looking at the swaying teacup in her hand, and remained silent for a moment.

Then she raised her head, her eyes no longer turbulent, only resolute: “I’ll go.”

“Alright.”

Kai stood up from the futon, carefully putting away the map jade slip and the guest elder token. “Rest tonight, we’ll depart early tomorrow morning.”

Jiang Xuelan nodded, taking her teacup back to her room.

Kai closed the door, sat back down on the futon, but did not enter meditation.

He took out the silver-white guest token, turning it over and over in his palm for a long time.

The Void Merchant Guild had chosen the perfect timing for this gift.

Just when he had finished a tough battle and needed rest and intelligence, they delivered a map so precise it was chilling.

Every piece of information marked on the map seemed to be telling him—look, the Eighteen Heavens are vast, the enemies are numerous, and danger is everywhere. But it doesn’t matter, we have all the information you need, and if you’re willing, we can become your most reliable friend.

“Friend,” Kai murmured, a meaningful smile curving his lips.

He put the token back into his storage bag, closed his eyes, and slowly circulated the Mind Concentration Technique, his spiritual energy flowing through his meridians, replenishing the chaotic energy consumed in today’s battle bit by bit. …

Ten miles outside Fire Crow City, in an abandoned mountain god temple,

Su Jingqiu sat beneath a broken statue, toying with a silver-white teleportation jade talisman.

A faint spatial power flowed within the talisman; if she infused it with spiritual energy, it could instantly teleport her to a safe area tens of thousands of miles away.

She didn't use it.

Not because she wasn't worried about danger, but because she knew Kai wouldn't harm her.

At least not now.

"The things have been delivered," she murmured to herself, her voice echoing in the temple.

She took a bronze mirror from her storage bag, its surface reflecting Wu Yuan's face.

"Guild Master, the gift has been delivered."

"He accepted it?" Wu Yuan's voice came from the mirror.

"He accepted it. The map and the token." Su Jingqiu paused, "But he accepted them calmly, without asking any questions or showing any emotion. This person... is more difficult to deal with than we expected."

Wu Yuan on the other side of the mirror was silent for a moment, then smiled.

"If he's not difficult to deal with, I'll find it boring. Continue to observe, don't reveal your identity, and only appear when he needs help."

"Understood."

Su Jingqiu put away the bronze mirror, stood up from under the dilapidated statue, and dusted off her skirt.

She walked to the entrance of the mountain god temple, gazing at the lights of Fire Crow City in the distance, a complex expression flashing in her eyes.

She was the vice president of the Void Merchant Guild, a third-grade Golden Immortal, skilled in disguise and social interaction, and had carried out countless missions without ever failing.

But this time, she felt an inexplicable unease.

The boy's eyes were too calm.

Calm like a hunter patiently waiting for his prey to walk into the trap, rather than a prey being targeted by three major forces simultaneously.

...

Meanwhile, in an inconspicuous house on the other side of Fire Crow City.

Yun Yi sat cross-legged on a simple wooden bed, a wooden sword resting on his lap, his eyes slightly closed.

His divine sense was like an invisible net, covering the entire Fire Crow City, and the aura of every cultivator in the city was within his perception.

Kai's aura was steady and deep in the small inn north of the city; he was cultivating.

Jiang Xuelan's aura was in the next room; she was also cultivating.

The woman who delivered the storage bag had already left Fire Crow City, lingering briefly at the Mountain God Temple ten miles outside the

city before heading south towards the Void Merchant Guild's Heavenly City.

People from the Void Merchant Guild.

Yun Yi opened his eyes, his handsome face expressionless.

He had witnessed the entire battle between Kai and the Flame God Palace in the Fallen God Wasteland, from Yan Po's arrival with his army to Kai's slaying of Yan Po with a single sword strike, repelling the Flame Tiger and Flame Leopard, and annihilating thirty Flame Dragon Guards—he saw every detail clearly.

He didn't show himself.

Not because he didn't want to, but because he couldn't.

The Flame God Palace had planted spies in the Fallen God Wasteland, and the Void Merchant Guild was also secretly observing.

If he had appeared at that time, with representatives from all three major forces present, the situation would have become extremely complicated, potentially even triggering an uncontrollable conflict.

That was not what True Immortal Jade Void wanted to see.

"To kill a peak third-grade Golden Immortal with a single sword strike,"

Yun Yi murmured to himself, his fingers lightly tracing the blade of his wooden sword

. "An eighth-grade True Immortal, to kill an opponent a whole grade higher, and that's with the opponent burning their essence blood. Such combat power..." He didn't finish his sentence, but a rare hint of solemnity flashed in his eyes.

He was the most outstanding disciple of the Daoist sect this generation, a second-grade Golden Immortal, already considered one of the top existences among the younger generation of the Eighteen Heavens.

But if he were to face Yan Po, he was confident of victory, but he absolutely couldn't kill him with a single sword strike.

He certainly couldn't annihilate thirty first-grade Golden Immortal elites within ten breaths.

And this young man named Kai was four minor realms lower than him in cultivation.

Yun Yi closed his eyes, withdrew his divine sense, and continued to wait quietly.

True Person Yu Xu said he would appear by his side when he needed help.

Now was not the time, but he knew that moment wouldn't be far off.

The aftershocks of the battle in the Fallen God Wasteland would soon spread throughout the entire Eighteen Heavens. The Flame God Palace had lost its Grand Elder and thirty elites; this grudge could not go unavenged.

The Hall of Light is definitely watching too.

The Void Merchant Guild's true colors will be revealed sooner or later.

And Kai, this young man who stirred up the entire Eighteenth Heaven upon his arrival, will soon find himself under the watchful eyes of countless people.

At that time, he will need not only force, but also allies.

And Qingyun Cave Heaven is his best choice.

Outside the window, two of the three blazing suns had already set, leaving only the last silvery-white moon hanging high in the sky.

The silvery moonlight shone on the black stone walls of Fire Raven City, enveloping the entire city in a cold, silvery glow.

In the distance, towards the Fallen God Wasteland, the dark red sand turned deep brown under the moonlight, and the scattered bones and battle relics were faintly visible in the night, like a silent tombstone.

Kai opened his eyes in the inn.

His purple eyes lit up in the darkness, like two burning purple flames.

He stood up from the futon, walked to the window, and pushed it open.

The silvery moonlight shone on his face, outlining his features as if sculpted by a knife.

He gazed north, towards the direction marked “Northern Abyss of Cold Light” on the map, his purple eyes reflecting the distant horizon.

There, low-hanging clouds revealed a faint, almost imperceptible, icy-blue halo, like the aurora borealis frozen for millennia, silently swirling in the night.

The Ice God lineage.

He murmured these two words in his heart.

In his sea of consciousness, the remnant soul of the Northern Abyss had completely subsided, without a trace of movement, but Kai could sense that the remnant soul was still there, only too weak, each awakening consuming his remaining strength.

“Northern Abyss of Cold Light,” Kai murmured, “I hope what you’re looking for really is there.”

He closed the window, sat back on the futon, and activated the Concentration Technique at full power, the chaotic energy surging through his meridians.

The next morning, as the first golden sun peeked over the eastern horizon, Fire Raven City awoke in the dawn.

The silvery moon had not yet fully set, and the crimson sun had just peeked out, three blazing suns simultaneously hanging in the sky, enveloping the entire city in a magnificent golden, silver, and red glow.

Kai opened his eyes from his meditation.

After a night of cultivation, the power of chaos had surged through his meridians for six full hours. The barrier of the mid-stage eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm had shown signs of loosening, but a breakthrough was still some distance away.

The power of chaos required an enormous amount of resources; relying solely on meditation, it would likely take years, even decades, to break through a minor realm.

He needed more resources, more battles, and more opportunities.

And the Northern Cold Abyss might be the next opportunity.

Kai stood up, stretched his limbs, and his bones cracked slightly.

He walked to the window and opened it, the cool morning breeze carrying the bustling atmosphere of the city rushing in.

Many cultivators were already walking on the streets, and vendors were setting up their stalls, their shouts rising and falling.

Smoke curled from the chimney of the three-story stone building in the city center, filling the air with the aroma of roasted spirit beast meat and spirit wine.

A slight noise came from the next room—Jiang Xuelan getting up.

A moment later, a knock sounded at the door.

“Come in.”

Jiang Xuelan pushed open the door, now dressed in clean white robes, her long hair tied back up, and a silver-white longsword hanging at her waist.

Her complexion was much better than yesterday; a night’s rest had restored her from the exhaustion of the Fallen God Wasteland, and her eyes regained their usual cool gleam.

“Let’s go.”

Kai checked the supplies in his storage bag; there were still plenty of pills left, and enough crystals as well.